Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) formerly known as Prisoner **Re-entry Resources**

The following is a list of sites and documents that may be useful in learning more about prisoner re-entry programs and how community organizations are active partners in the reentry process. This information includes other agency efforts and programs, training, and technical assistance opportunities and publications.

PRI Evaluation

A multiyear evaluation of the 30 original PRI grantees was undertaken, beginning in 2005, to assess the success of the grantees in implementing an employment centered service approach for ex-offenders. For more on this evaluation, please click here.

Helpful DOL Resources for Community Non Profits in Reentry

Mentoring Ex-Prisoners: A Guide for Reentry Programs — (PDF)

This manual provides guidelines and recommendations intended to address the challenges and to increase the benefits of mentoring adult ex-prisoners as part of their involvement in reentry programs.

Ready4Reentry: A Prisoner Reentry Toolkit — (PDF)

This toolkit is a guide for community organizations interested in establishing or enhancing their prisoner reentry program. This document covers a variety of topics, such as recruiting, case management, job placement, mentoring, and forming successful partnerships.

Just Out

This promising practices guide examines the early implementation of Ready4Work and reports on the best emerging practices in four key program areas.

Other Department of Labor Resources

One Stop Career Centers

Centers provide access to workforce information, job counseling and placement programs, and various other resources. One Stop Career Centers also provide education and job training support. There are also numerous electronic resources available through the program's website.
Federal Bonding Program (FBP)

Founded in 1966, the FBP was designed to protect employers from fraudulent or dishonest acts by "at-risk" employees (i.e. candidates with a history of arrest or other morally questionable behavior). Since commercially available bonds do not protect businesses against these candidates, the FBP provides free protection bonds for the first six months of employment. These benefits are available to any employer in any state, and information on the application process is available on the organization's website.

View a list of the state federal bonding program coordinators

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

This a federal tax credit that encourages employers to hire people who fall within eight targeted groups of job seekers, including ex-offenders, by reducing employers' federal income tax liability.

Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP)

This program provides services to assist homeless veterans in finding meaningful employment. Job placement, career counseling and job training are among the many services provided. HVRP works with various veterans' organizations as a means of reaching out to the veteran community.

Prisoner Re-entry: Issues and Answers

This publication provides basic information on prisoner re-entry and community organizations.

Ready4Work: Business Perspectives on Ex-Offender Re-entry

This publication provides information from the focus groups which DOL conducted with the business community to learn from their experiences in hiring ex-offenders.

Training and Technical Assistance

National Institute of Corrections (NIC)

NIC is an agency within the DOJ that offers training, technical assistance, and information services to those who provide employment services to people with criminal records. Recently the NIC announced a three-day, DVD-based Offender Employment Specialist (OES) training course. Please see the links below for detailed information and contacts.

Training Brochure

Video on OES training program

Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS)

CNCS is an independent federal agency that provides training and support for volunteer organizations around the country, including community-based programs. The Resource Center (see below) is an excellent source for training tools and other technical assistance. Additionally, the website features access to live and recorded "webinars" discussing topics of crime prevention and prisoner reentry. For a guide on how to navigate the CNCS website and learn about training opportunities please see the link below.

The Resource Center

Crime Prevention/Prisoner Reentry Webinars

Based on the success of the 2007 PSN Anti-Gang Training Conference, the Department of Justice will be offering several more anti-gang conferences in 2008. These conferences are intended to teach law enforcement officials state-of-the-art gang prevention techniques. The main site contains information on these conferences (including the calendar linked below), and various other resources.

2008 Conference Calendar

Department of Justice Resources

Weed and Seed

This is a community-based, multi-agency strategy that involves a two-pronged approach: first, law enforcement agencies and prosecutors cooperate in "weeding out" violent criminals and drug abusers. Secondly, public agencies and community-based private organizations collaborate to "seed" much- needed human services. These services include prevention, intervention, treatment, and neighborhood restoration programs. A community oriented patrolling component bridges the weeding and seeding elements. This site includes a section on how community organizations are involved in building partnerships to prevent crime and strengthen neighborhoods.

Find additional information about the Weed and Seed Data Center

Department of Justice's Youth Gang Prevention Initiative

This choice-based program engages community organizations in an effort to provide America's Youth and offenders returning to the community with opportunities that help them resist gang involvement. The six cities selected to implement this program are: Los Angeles, CA; Cleveland, OH; Dallas-Fort Worth, TX; Milwaukee, WI; Tampa, FL; And the 222 Corridor that stretches from Easton to Lancaster, PA, near Philadelphia.

U.S. Department of Justice Gang Reduction Program

The purpose of this program is to incorporate federal, state, and local resources in the use of modern techniques of gang prevention, intervention, and suppression. There are currently four pilot program locations: East Los Angeles, CA; Milwaukee, WI; North Miami Beach, FL; and Richmond, VA. The linked site provides information on the program, and other resources related to anti gang activities.

Serious and Violent Offender Re-entry Initiative (SVORI)

This comprehensive program addresses both juvenile and adult populations of serious, high-risk offenders.

Character-Based Release (FCBR) Programs

Some states currently have character-based initiatives. The purpose of these programs is to provide inmates with life skills, anger management, and other such services to ease their reintegration into society. Florida is one of the states pioneering this approach, and currently has three entire correctional facilities, or Character-Based Institutions, in which the entire inmate population is a part of this initiative.

Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Programs

The Federal BOP offers several options for prisoner reentry, including Residential Re-entry Centers (RRC), Comprehensive Sanction Centers (CSC), and home confinement options. RRCs are typical halfway houses, in which contractors monitor the activities of recently released prisoners, to ensure an effective reintroduction into the community. CSCs are more structured than RRCs, and utilize a five-step process to scale back oversight from 24 hour confinement to home confinement. Home confinement is simply the requirement that the newly released prisoners remain in their own homes during non-working hours.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

The OJJDP is a Department of Justice Program, which provides support to local and state governments in an effort to improve the juvenile justice system. The OJJDP Model Programs Guide is an excellent resource for anyone working in the juvenile justice system. It provides a database of past programs, and ideas for implementing new practices in the prevention and intervention of delinquency.

Other Prisoner Reentry Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

SAMHSA is responsible for both the Access to Recovery program and the Center for Substance abuse prevention. Details on the individual programs can be found below.

Access to Recovery (ATR)

ATR is a substance abuse recovery program similar to the Beneficiary-Choice Contracting Program that grants payment vouchers to those who are seeking substance abuse treatment. The vouchers allow the patient to choose his/her treatment site, with the hope that they will be better able to pick a site tailored to their needs. There are currently ATR programs in 14 States.

ATR Fact Sheet

2004 ATR Grantees

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

This site provides access to various educational resources and programs that focus on the prevention of substance abuse. Various tools, such as program planning, strategies for implementation, and other such resources can be found here.

Center for Disease Control (CDC)

The CDC provides various services, such as HIV testing and the Minority AIDS Initiative. The CDC's main website also provides links to various other resources.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Past offenders are allowed to live in Section 8 subsidized housing. More information on Section 8 housing can be obtained on the HUD website.

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

The Corporation for National and Community Service's VISTA program focuses on developing prisoner reentry programs that help recently released prisoners find meaningful work. Aside from the summary linked above, the VISTA program handbook has excellent information on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of prisoner reentry programs.

U.S. Courts Office of Probation and Pretrial Services

The Office of Probation and Pretrial Services has its own prisoner reentry supervision programs, which seek to put recently released prisoners back into a positive environment in the hopes of reduced recidivism. In addition to an assigned probation officer, who checks on the prisoner's progress with work, school, and so on, the office provides mental health, substance abuse, and other such treatment services. Other options for release such as home confinement are also programs sponsored by the office.

State Focused Reentry Efforts

NGA Prisoner Re-entry Policy Academy

The NGA Policy Academy works with state governors and policy makers to develop new strategies to improve prisoner reentry programs and recidivism rates. One of the program's main goals is to allow states to tap into the already existing programs (drug treatment, job placement, etc.) that will aid in the process.

Justice Reinvestment Program

The Justice Reinvestment Program is an initiative by the Council of State Governments Justice Center, which aims to improve the way states think about prisoner reentry. The first step in the program is to analyze and identify trends in the prison population, like which neighborhoods or areas prisoners tend to return to. Then, state spending in these areas is assessed, to determine if there is a way to streamline and integrate multiple programs targeted at the same areas. The overall goal of this is to generate savings from this increased efficiency that can be reinvested in community programs. There are currently Justice Reinvestment programs in 8 states.

Find more information about the program in your state

Additional Resources and Tools

Urban Institute

The Urban Institute has compiled a body of research and information regarding prisoner re-entry. Included is their Reentry Roundtable series which brought together prisoner re-entry researchers to share their findings and discuss relevant issues.

Criminal Offender Statistics

The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics has compiled this body of information including statistics on rates of recidivism, prevalence of imprisonment, comparisons of Federal and State inmates, and gender-related inmate statistics, as well as several publications covering different aspects of inmates and crime.

State by State and National Trends

This site provides national and state annual statistics for all categories of crime.

U.S. Department of Justice Re-entry Program (Reentry.gov)

This is the main site for the DOJ's Reentry program. It contains an overview of the Prisoner Reentry Initiative as a whole, with various links and references to other organizations and resources. The Reentry Resource Map is an excellent way to locate reentry resources around the country.

The Reentry Policy Council was designed to assist state governments with various reentry issues. Its goal was to develop ideas and policies for state officials, and to improve information sharing among organizations. The RPC is organized into three groups: Public Safety and Restorative Activities, Supportive Health and Housing, and Workforce Development and Employment Opportunities. In 2005, the RPC published an extensive report, which reflects the results of a series of meetings among 100 of the most respected workforce, health, housing, public safety, family, community, and victim experts in the country.

Ready4Work:
A Business, Community, and Criminal Justice Partnership

Structure and Purpose

The Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) was designed to expand the elements of an earlier prisoner reentry project called Ready4Work (R4W). Ready4Work was an ETA pilot project that also helped returning 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. R4W was launched in 2003 and was a three year pilot program to address the needs of ex-prisoners utilizing Faith Based and Community Organizations (FBCO). 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 nonprofit — and a consortium of private foundations.

Ready4Work placed 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. The following select organizations were chosen to provide services to adult ex-offenders in eleven cities:

City of Memphis Second Chance Ex-Felon Program — Memphis, Tennessee
Allen Temple Housing and Economic Development Corp — Oakland, California
East of the River Clergy Police and Community Partnership — Washington, DC
Exodus Transitional Community — East Harlem, New York
Holy Cathedral/Word of Hope Ministries — Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Operation New Hope — Jacksonville, Florida
SAFER Foundation — Chicago, Illinois
Search for Common Ground — Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Union Rescue Mission — Los Angeles, California
Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church — Houston, Texas
America Works Detroit — Detroit, MI

For further information on the R4W program, including participant demographics, outcomes and resources, please click here.

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.

Once individuals entered the program, they were eligible for up to one year's worth of services. The typical program trajectory began with a week or two of training in "soft skills" such as résumé writing and workplace etiquette to prepare participants for their job search. Participants were also matched with mentors in one-to-one and/or group mentoring relationships.
Upon completion of their initial employment training, most participants began searching for work, though some continued with more advanced training related to specific industries.
Case managers and job placement specialists helped participants find jobs and supported them while they were working.

Participant Demographics African American males constituted the majority of Ready4Work enrollees. The general returning ex-offender population is approximately 90 percent male.[1] Rates of enrollment for males in Ready4Work tracked that figure closely constituting 81 percent of
the program's participants. Seventy eight percent of Ready4Work participants were
African American, 8 percent were White non-Hispanic and 5 percent were Hispanic.
The average age of a Ready4Work participant was 26 years old —
eight years younger than the average for ex-offenders released from prison.[2] In sum, the program served a predominantly male population that was on average younger and composed of a greater percentage of minorities than the overall population of those returning from prison — statistics that, when combined with nonviolent presenting offenses, indicate a higher chance of recidivating.[3]

Table 1: Comparison of Persons Entering Parole in 1999 with R4W Participants		
	Persons Entering State Parole in 1999[1]	**Ready4Work Participants**[2]
Average age	34 years old	26 years old
Race/ethnicity		
White non Hispanic	35%	8%
African American non Hispanic	47%	78%
Hispanic	16%	5%
Other	1%	9%
Gender		
Male	90%	81%
Female	10%	19%
[1]Source: Hughes et al. 2001. [2]Source: R4W sites' management information systems.		

Education and Work History
Two of the most significant challenges faced by ex-prisoners are lack of education and the absence of meaningful work history. At enrollment, 39 percent of Ready4Work participants had not finished high school or obtained their GEDs. More than half had held a full-time job for one year or longer prior to entering prison, 31 percent had held a full-time job for less than one year and approximately 16 percent had never held a full-time job.

Criminal History
Ready4Work targeted individuals returning from prison with a high probability of recidivating for

enrollment. 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 2). 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 2: 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.
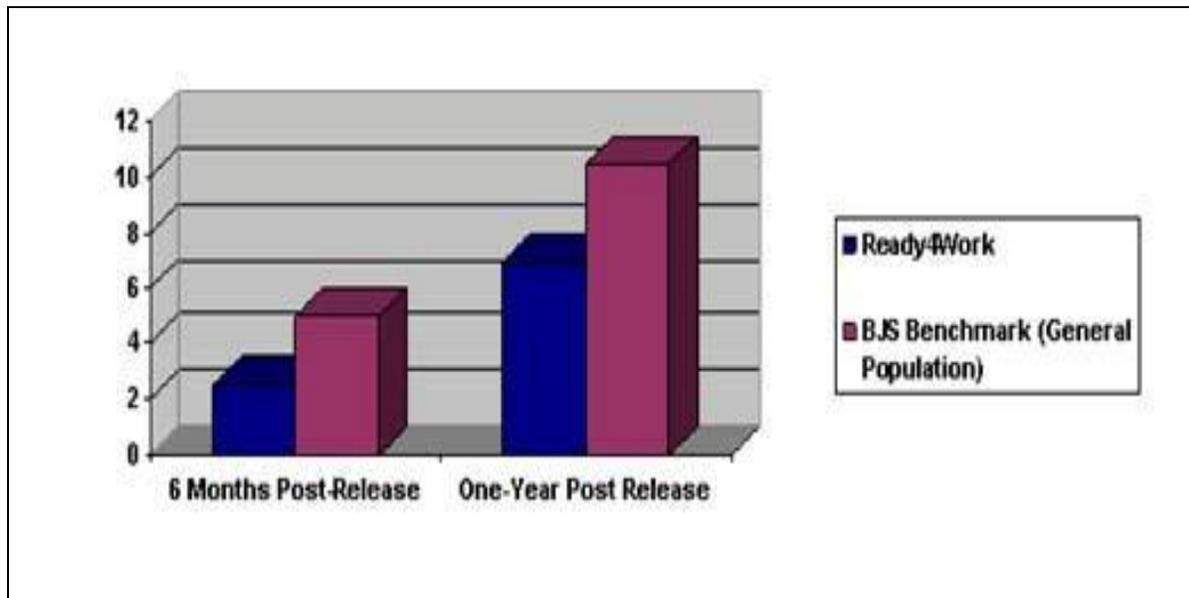
Recidivism

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 1994.[4]" Ready4Work recidivism rates are half the national re-incarceration rate of 5 percent at six months and 34 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 2.75 percent recidivism rate for Ready4Work participants at 6 months is 54 percent lower than the 6 percent BJS Benchmark figure. The 7.28 percent Ready4Work recidivism rate at the one-year post-release mark was 49 percent lower than this BJS subset at the one-year post-release

Table 3: Ready4Work Recidivism Rates and Bureau of Justice Statistics Benchmarks

Table 4: Ready4Work Recidivism Rates and Bureau of Justice Statistics Benchmarks for African American Male Non-Violent Offenders between the Ages of 18 and 34.
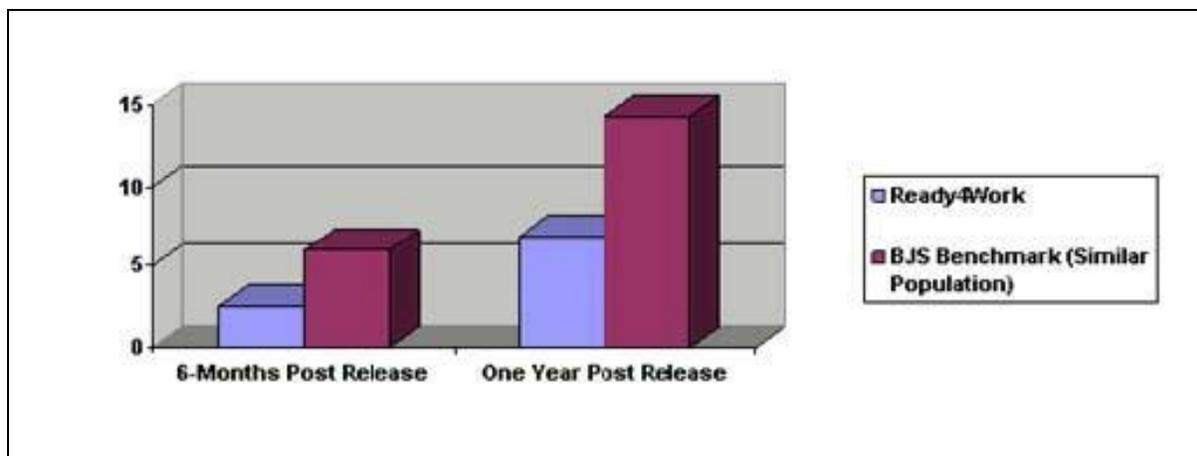
Mentoring as a Component of Ready4Work

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*, linked below.

Publications

Ready4Work In Brief: Interim Outcomes Are In provides evaluative information on the program.

Just Out examines the early implementation of Ready4Work and reports on the best emerging practices in four key program areas.

Mentoring Ex-Prisoners in the Ready4Work Reentry Initiative reports on the success of mentoring for ex-offenders.

Call to Action highlights the accomplishments of three Ready4Work sites: Operation New Hope, The Second Chance Program, and the East of the River Clergy- Police-Community Partnership.