

FAITH-BASED REENTRY TOOLKIT



Chaplaincy Services Branch

An informational guide for faith-based and religious organizations in assisting ex-offenders as returning citizens to their respective communities

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Make me an instrument of your peace.

– St. Francis of Assisi

Communities of Faith

Faith and religious organizations are **partners with law enforcement** in improving public safety and promoting neighborhood revitalization.

Faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) **provide essential services** to prisoners, victims, and community members affected by crimes.

They bring together residents and local leaders to **address pressing social issues** to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. – Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



*Be the change you want to see in this world.
– Mahatma Gandhi*



There are more than 350,000 religious congregations in the U.S. The average congregation has 100-400 members.

U.S. congregations generate an estimated \$8.1 billion annual revenue, which supports programs to address social needs.

Faith-based institutions engage 45 million volunteers, nearly half of the total number of American volunteers.

Virtually all U.S. prison systems offer faith-based worship services; 93 % also offer prayer groups.

(Sources: America's Religious Congregations: Measuring Their Contributions to Society and Corrections Compendium)

Boundaries

Each year, more than 650,000 former inmates from state and federal U.S. institutions return to communities. The formerly incarcerated face daunting obstacles reentering society including:

Social stigma of criminal record

Inability to secure a job, housing, basic needs

Lack of education or employment skills

Need for addiction or mental health treatment

Disconnection with family, friends, or support

Limited access to community resources

Advancements in technology they never learned

Inadequate income or financial support

God does not look at how much we do, but with how much love we do it.- Mother Teresa

Know your limits – An organization cannot serve all people with all community resources and services at all times. Clearly define what you can and cannot do for returning citizens. Refer individuals requiring professional help.

Define your target audience – Define the people you can serve (mothers with children only, single men only, etc.). Due to liability issues, consider if you are willing to accept individuals with certain past records, especially predatory offenses.

Know your members and volunteers – Before taking on a reentry ministry, make sure your organization is supportive, willing, and able to assist and receive these returning citizens. Receive the full support from your volunteers to work with returning citizens.

Establish clear boundaries – Establish clear boundaries for caregivers and those in your care. Unclear or vague boundaries can lead to compromises and misunderstandings that undermine your ministry efforts.

Know what is already available – Link into existing community resources already available within their local area, in order to avoid duplication of similar services. Find out if there are other organizations providing the same services and resources for returning citizens. Your organization could provide referrals to other services.

Collaboration

Since 2002 with the establishment of the White House Faith-Based Initiative, the federal government has actively engaged with faith communities throughout the U.S. to develop working partnerships and involvement with government endeavors. Federal agencies established centers for faith-based initiatives in order to collaborate with community stakeholders. In addition, most state governments have reentry networks with community organizations.

Show mercy to those on earth and God will show mercy to you. – Prophet Muhammad



Reentry Resources

The Council of State Governments Justice Center:

[National Reentry Resource Center – CSG Justice Center](#)

[Reentry Partnerships: A Guide for States & Faith-Based and Community Organizations – CSG Justice Center](#)

U.S. Department of Labor, Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives:

Ready4Reentry: Prisoner Reentry Toolkit for Faith-Based and Community Organizations

<https://doleta.gov/PRI/PDF/Pritoolkit.pdf>

U.S. Department of Justice, Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships:

Faith and Communities in Action: A Resource Guide for Increasing Partnership Opportunities to Prevent Crime and Violence

[Bureau of Justice Assistance - Faith-Based and Community Initiatives](#)

Ways to Help

The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Chaplaincy Services Branch is actively engaging religious leaders and community stakeholders in assisting formerly incarcerated individuals as returning citizens and restoring them back as productive and contributing members of respective communities.

Increase awareness of those affected by crime and incarceration by incorporating those needs into regular prayer, study, and worship offerings.

Educate your faith community about crime, incarceration, and reentry needs.

Volunteer in correctional institutions, halfway houses, or existing community reentry ministries.

Contact us to become a mentoring organization for the BOP's faith-based reentry programs.

In the face of suffering, one has no right to turn away and not see. – Elie Wiesel

Without community resources and support, more than 2 out of 3 returning citizens will be rearrested within 3 years of their release, and more than 50% will return to prison for committing new crimes or violating the conditions of their release.

(Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics).

Contact Us

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