VOICES FROM THE FIELD:

MAJOR GAPS & UNMET NEEDS IN REENTRY & BEST PRACTICES FOR STARTING A REENTRY PROGRAM

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ABOUT ROOT & REBOUND

Our mission is to reduce barriers and maximize opportunities for returning citizens in the Bay Area, throughout California, and beyond. We aim to accomplish this mission through innovative, holistic, and client-centered services, including:

• Direct legal services with social services support.
• Legal education and trainings.
• High-impact policy advocacy and litigation.
• Holistic strategies: Reentry Resource Center & connection events.

Our vision is of a world where returning citizens have the opportunities and resources available to become productive and valued members of our community.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to all of the formerly incarcerated advocates who are working in their communities to improve the lives of the people coming home after them, especially the people who gave their time to us to put together this report: Coach, David, Leonard, Michael, Dominique, Connie, David C., Steve, Jason, Airto, Joe, and Jerry.
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BACKGROUND

From October 2013 to January 2014, Root & Rebound was in a program design phase in which its earliest staff members interviewed over 70 people in the field of reentry, including attorneys, social workers, formerly incarcerated advocates, educators, and academics, to gain insight into the gaps and needs in the reentry field and to document best practices. These interviews were conducted in San Francisco, Oakland, and Richmond (the Bay Area), as well as Los Angeles and New York City.¹ This report is intended to summarize those interviews so that others can learn from these experts about best practices, the gaps and needs in reentry, and their thoughts on successful models.

Why is this report timely and important?

This is a rapidly changing time in criminal justice policy, and the landscape of reentry services is ever-shifting. At the federal level, the Department of Justice is acknowledging the problems of mass incarceration by reexamining harsh drug sentencing laws and investing increased funds into prisoner reentry and reintegration programs.² In California, the corrections system is under a massive overhaul—prison and jail populations are shifting, greater numbers of long-term prisoners are being released onto parole, and state funding for the expanding jail population is streamlining down to county-level control.

In April 2011, California Governor Jerry Brown signed “Public Safety Realignment” or Assembly Bill 109 (AB 109) into law, transferring much of the state’s criminal justice system to county-level control. This law shifted the responsibility for people convicted of certain non-serious, non-violent, and non-sexual felony offenses from state prisons and parole to county jails and probation. It also established a new funding stream for counties, distributing $4.4 billion to counties by 2016-2017 with discretion in how to spend these funds and implement Realignment at a local level. Since 2011, California’s parole population has dropped dramatically—from 120,000 to 60,000³—while the jail population has ballooned, with an average jail sentence jumping from 30 days to 1.5 years after Realignment’s implementation. About 1,000 people in California jails are serving sentences of more than 5 years, placing a greater financial and resource burden on the counties.

Separate from the changes under Realignment in California, there has been a shift in the politics of parole. More Long-Termers are coming home. The current Board of Parole Hearings Commissioners and Governor of California, Jerry Brown, are granting parole at significantly higher rates and releasing far more people who have served long sentences back into the community. Moreover, a special group of long-termers is being released under Proposition 36, which allows for the release of certain California prisoners sentenced under California’s old Three Strikes Law. However, most of the “Three Strikers” released through a Proposition 36 sentence reduction do not have parole supervision or services upon release, because the new law treats people in this group as having already served time well beyond the appropriate sentence length.

Lastly, for those readers working locally in the Bay Area, it is important to note that the demographics of San Francisco and the Bay Area are rapidly changing, impacting all reentering citizens. Wealth in San Francisco has risen drastically and local government has not created adequate protections for poor people being pushed out of the city.⁴ The San Francisco homeless population has

¹ See Appendix A of this report for a full list of interviewees.
² To learn more about recent federal reforms on reentry, see Major Federal Reforms Focus on Reentry Support, ROOT & REBOUND BLOG (Mar. 31, 2013), http://rootrebound.wordpress.com/2014/03/31/major-federal-reforms-focus-on-reentry-support/. See also Accomplishments under the Leadership of Attorney General Eric Holder, U.S. DEP’T OF JUSTICE (July 2013), http://www.justice.gov/accomplishments/.
⁴ See also Aaron Sankin, Bay Area Poverty: Poor Pushed From San Francisco To Suburbs, HUFFINGTON POST (Sept. 4, 2012, 10:41 PM), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/05/bay-area-poverty_n_1855189.html; The Suburbanization of Poverty in the San Francisco Bay
grown, a population that greatly overlaps with low-income people in reentry who struggle to secure safe and affordable housing. Reentry services organizations play a vital role in providing a safety net to low-income people returning to San Francisco and the Bay Area from prison and jail, who may not otherwise be able to cope with the high cost of living and the limited availability of housing and services.

It is therefore a critical time for nonprofits, foundations, and government stakeholders to step in and provide support. We hope that this report will give a better sense of the gaps and needs in reentry and suggestions on how we can all improve our efforts.

**Executive Summary**

“Reentry” is a continuum, a process, not a fixed point in time. Reentry work, therefore, covers many points in a person’s life. It is planning for release while a person is still incarcerated; it is working with the person in his or her first few days out; it is also assisting a person many years after release, when his or her criminal record continues to pose barriers to housing and employment. The authors met and interviewed formerly incarcerated people who are experiencing challenges at different points in the reentry process, as well as advocates who work in different points in the continuum.

There are two main parts to this report. **Part I describes the gaps and major needs in reentry.** No matter where they are in the reentry continuum, most interviewees agreed that there is a dearth of support and services in the following areas:

- Connecting with service providers before release and having a consistent and stable support team throughout the continuum of reentry.
- Securing basic necessities like clothing, cell phones, transit, and a livable income.
- Finding safe and affordable housing.
- Acquiring and maintaining gainful employment.
- Accessing federal, state, and local public benefits like food stamps and Social Security income.
- Family reunification support, including family law and dependency law services.
- Finding affordable medical care, substance abuse treatment, and mental health services.

**Part II of this report describes best practices for starting or growing a reentry program.** Most interviewees agreed that the most important practices for an organization to follow are:

- Having a holistic and client-centered service model that focuses on reentry planning, peer mentorship, and building social capital.
- Starting small, with a narrow focus.
- Building a strong referral network to ensure wrap-around services.
- Incorporating peer-mentorship and self-advocacy.
- Creating a feedback loop between direct services and policy advocacy work.
- Building a strong board, core staff, and robust volunteer network.
- Tapping into innovative and experimental funding sources and seeking unrestricted funds.
- Tracking programmatic successes and outcomes.
PART I:

MAJOR GAPS & UNMET NEEDS IN REENTRY

Each interviewee was asked about the major gaps and the unmet needs in reentry. For formally incarcerated people who had been through reentry, answers were based on their experiences and what they wish they had access to in the first few days, months, and years out. For advocates and services providers, answers were based on the years spent working with huge numbers of clients and their frustrations with systems that are not adequately meeting the needs of this population. The needs identified and services required to meet these needs are not of one kind: they span legal and advocacy, social and psychological, and healthcare needs.

We have described these gaps and needs in an order that follows the timeline of a reentering person, starting with what is missing within prison and then moving into the greatest needs arising in the first few days, weeks, and months post-release.

I.A. Need for Reentry Support Pre-Release and into Community Life

It can take years for a person in prison to be prepared for reentry, and this work has to start on the inside. Yet the California Department of Corrections (CDCR) hosts very limited, if any, pre-release programs in, leaving the onus on individuals, families, nonprofit groups, and reentry service providers to help prisoners prepare for release.

Even when nonprofits establish reentry programs inside prisons or jails, there is often a large disconnect between institution-based programs and reentry programs on the outside. Interviewees expressed that it is far more effective for a person in reentry to have a bridge of services available from the inside-out, and without sufficient inside-out connections, people returning to the community struggle.

For example, the day that an individual is released can be fraught with problems. The institution may change the date of release, so the appointed pick-up person has to return many days in a row; family members become distraught having to return home because they have no money for a hotel near the prison; or no one shows up at all. Most prisons do not have a staff person who arranges the releases in an organized fashion, and the onus is on prisoners to connect with people on the outside to schedule pick-up, leading to a very inefficient and frustrating release process. And afterwards, most people leaving prison or jail do not have a one-stop shop where they can go for help to coordinate their initial days out.

Reentry organizations on the outside should play an integral role in these first few days of reentry and be a regular stop for clients in their first days and weeks, the most vulnerable time. In order for an organization to plug into this early stage, they must collaborate and connect with prison- and jail-based programs.

I.B. Need for Collaborative Service Provision

Reentry services are highly fragmented, particularly in the Bay Area. For people who are desperately trying to manage their time, travel, and budget, the fragmentation of reentry services only compounds the challenges of reintegration. One reason for this fragmentation is that each organization has limited time and resources to spend reaching out to other groups. Another reason for fragmented services is funding restrictions based on geographic and programmatic limitations. Through AB 109, California distributes reentry and criminal justice funds through the counties, which in turn then fund service provision only for their geographic area. Furthermore, government grants often limit the programs that an organization can administer or the populations it can serve. For example, some organizations cannot serve sex-offenders, or can only serve people with children due to funding restrictions. Clients who do not fit within these geographic or programmatic boundaries cannot access the service, even if it would be highly beneficial to them.
I.C. Need for Support with Basic Necessities & Developing Life Skills

Although often overlooked by service providers, one of the greatest needs for newly released people are basic necessities like clothing, emergency and transportation funds, and a mode of communication like a cell phone. Some nonprofit reentry groups have tackled this issue by providing clients with a “reentry pack” upon release—a prepaid cell phone, clean undergarments and clothing, maps, and food and snacks.

Another major issue early in reentry is re-learning basic life skills, including but not limited to using public transit, setting up email, using cell phones to communicate, opening a bank account, and budgeting time and money. People who have been incarcerated for many years need even more guidance and support. One nonprofit’s solution is to have an advocate, often someone who has been through reentry, walk each client through his or her first few days of community life, from taking the train, to going to the supermarket, to budgeting.

I.D. Need for Assistance with Obtaining Official Forms of Identification

One of the most basic needs for reentering citizens is obtaining official identification documents, but there can be barriers to doing so. One of the biggest barriers is unpaid court debt, restitution, and back-ordered child support. Many people who come out of jail and prison discover, upon applying for identification, that they owe these fees, and because of their debt, the county will not provide them with a driver’s license. Yet without identification documents, a person will likely not be able to open a bank account, find a job, obtain housing, apply for benefits, or access other basic services. Without alternative programs that allow people to pay for debts owed through community service, people are left without an ability to secure a driver’s license, and as a result, access to other cornerstones of stability.

Another major challenge for returning citizens is obtaining copies of birth certificates and social security cards. Without these key documents, or with the wrong information, people are often ineligible to open bank accounts, get housing, and apply for basic services. State agencies ask people to jump through multiple bureaucratic hoops and wait long periods to re-issue birth certificates. Similarly, Social Security cards are difficult to acquire because many reentering people have lost their Social Security information. Even more, sometimes the information that they get from Social Security Administration is wrong. One formerly incarcerated person interviewed was actually issued the Social Security number of a deceased person, and for a long period of time this caused huge problems for him in getting a bank account, establishing credit, and acquiring housing.

I.E. Need for Reentry Legal Services

There are very few attorneys whose practice focuses on reentry, and even fewer lawyers serving newly released people in California. The reentry-focused attorneys who do exist tend to focus on expungement services, which are geared towards individuals who are a number of years into reentry, and/or off parole or probation (a requirement to be eligible for expungement).

Interviewees observed that legal assistance for reentering people is critical and should begin while people are still incarcerated or early in the process of reentry. People in reentry cannot alone assess their legal needs and know where and how to self-advocate. Simply having a legal advocate in this period of time makes all the difference.

5 In certain counties in California there exist “homeless courts,” some of which allow homeless residents to perform community service to eliminate outstanding warrants or court-ordered debts that they would otherwise be unable to pay. See Homeless Courts, A.B.A., http://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_services/homelessness_poverty/resources/homeless_courts.html (last visited May 1, 2014).
I.F. Need for Housing

When a person leaves prison or jail, securing safe and affordable housing is typically their first priority, but can be nearly impossible. Any person with limited financial resources struggles to afford a safe place to live, and a conviction record only compounds the problem. More concerning, many of our laws actually permit housing exclusion of people with criminal records, and there is little room for litigation. Private landlords and public housing authorities are allowed under law to restrict people because of their conviction record. Section 8 public housing, for example, bans people with certain types of offenses (like felony drug convictions) from living in that housing. Even more, if family members living in Section 8 housing allow a “banned” person to live in their home, they can lose their housing. Because this discrimination in public housing has been held to be legal, many reentry advocates have given up on challenging public housing exclusions. Similarly, private landlords are permitted under law to discriminate against people on the basis of their criminal records, so long as it does not violate other civil rights laws, including the Fair Housing Act. This is an area ripe for litigation, since under the Fair Housing Act, private landlords cannot under law have a blanket exclusion of people of color and Blacks and Latinos are convicted and have criminal records at rates far higher than Whites. Interviewees with experience in this area of law note that most attorneys put their resources into educating landlords on behalf of formerly incarcerated tenants instead of bringing civil rights litigation.

People convicted of sex offenses who must register on the public Sex Offender Registry face even more formidable obstacles in finding safe and stable housing. They are legally restricted from living within certain distances of schools and other locations. One health treatment program in Los Angeles reported that 200 to 300 of their clients were convicted of sex offenses and had nowhere to live.

Because public and private housing options exclude people with criminal records, many reentering people turn to transitional homes and beds at shelters, but the current demand for these resources exceeds supply. Many cannot find housing and become homeless, either on the street or “couch surfing,” moving from one friend’s living room to another. Compounding this dearth of safe housing is the lack of housing advocates. People in reentry need housing advocates who can educate them about their rights, the rights of family members who want to provide a place to live, eviction defense, and how to conduct soft advocacy with landlords. Without this support, a person can quickly end up homeless and on the streets.

I.G. Need for Avenues to Gainful Employment

Almost all reentering people identify finding a job as a top priority when they are released. A job gives people feelings of productivity, self-efficacy, and confidence. Furthermore, as one interviewee said, “every day on the job is a day away from the street corner.” Importantly, having a job is often a condition of release by the Board of Parole Hearings. Yet jobs can be hard to find, especially with a criminal record and after years of incarceration and being out of the job market. People with criminal records often struggle to find and maintain employment, given the proliferation of discrimination at all stages of employment: in application review, interviews, hiring, promotion, and termination decisions. Under state and federal law, this discrimination may be completely lawful. Most states allow employers to ask about and consider criminal records in making employment decisions. The factors they can consider include convictions and arrests that never led to conviction.

While there are some federal and state laws that provide limited protection, employers often commonly fail to comply with these laws. For example, the federal consumer protection law—the Fair Credit Reporting Act or FCRA—and the more protective California law equivalent, the Consumer Credit Reporting Agencies Act, both require accuracy in background checks and mandate that employers provide a copy of background check reports to workers before any adverse employment decision is taken. Adding to these protections are the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations. The EEOC discourages employers from wholesale exclusion of people with criminal records, and encourages individualized assessments of a job applicant with a criminal record. The EEOC has provided further protection by holding that the exclusion of workers with a criminal record from employment may be a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
Because employment discrimination cases often lead to high-impact changes in employers’ policies and practices, it would behoove reentry advocates to pursue Title VII and FCRA-related violations. There needs to be more advocates bringing more cases for employment practices to change.

**I.H. Need for Legal Assistance with Remedies Related to Employment**

- **Need for Expungement Services**
  “Expungement clinics” (also known as “clean slate”, “reentry” or “second chance clinics”) are the most common form of reentry legal services in California. More accurately referred to as “dismissals” in California, expungements in CA technically set aside a person’s conviction and dismiss the original charge. Expungement, therefore, is a great legal remedy for people who qualify: individuals who are off parole or at least half-way through probation. Expungement clinics assist eligible clients with a number of record-cleaning legal issues including preparing an application to the court to dismiss eligible criminal records, applying for early termination of probation, and petitioning to reduce certain felonies to misdemeanors. There are expungement clinics throughout the state, concentrated in major metropolitan areas. Thus, while a significant number of expungement clinics exist, there is still a huge need for people living in rural areas who have less access to expungement services. There is currently an encouraging push to have expungement services available at public defender offices across the state.

- **Need for Advocacy with Occupational Licensing Denials**
  Occupational licensing denials pose a huge barrier for formerly incarcerated people. This discrimination by licensing agencies is permitted under law, as the majority of states allow occupational licensing agencies to disqualify applicants with any kind of criminal record. Most agencies can ban someone from getting a license regardless of how serious the criminal history, how long ago it occurred, and without considering the applicant’s work history, qualifications, or personal circumstances in relation to the job or license being sought. Such denials are prevalent in the industries of childcare, real estate, nursing, custodial and janitorial services, barbers, cosmetology, chiropractics, and counseling.
  
  In California, Administrative Law Judges (ALJs) adjudicate disputes over occupational licenses at a hearing. According to many formerly incarcerated people who have applied for occupational licenses in California, the ALJ is especially likely to uphold the denial of a professional license if the applicant was convicted of a crime involving “moral turpitude,” which includes almost any commitment offense classified as violent. Therefore, anyone with a past crime involving violence will be unable to build a stable career in a field they are passionate about, no matter how much time has passed.

  There are several legal services organizations in the Bay Area working on occupational licensing issues, including but not limited to Equal Rights Advocates, the National Employment Law Project, the East Bay Community Law Center, Bay Area Legal Aid, and Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights. To support their work, other reentry advocates can track their clients’ occupational licensing issues and report to these advocacy groups which agencies are denying licenses most frequently on the basis of criminal records. With this information, advocacy groups taking on these issues can be more informed when they approach agencies to change their policies.

**I.I. Need for Assistance Applying for Public Benefits**

Federal, state, and local public benefits offer cash entitlements and need-based assistance programs that can help many reentering individuals and their families stay financially afloat. Ideally, people should be enrolled in benefit programs before they are released so that they have a steady source of income in the early

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6 See Bus. & Prof. Code, § 490.  
8 See *Nunez v. Holder* (9th Cir. 2010) 594 F.3d 1124, 1130-32.
and most vulnerable phase of reentry. Unfortunately, there are policies in place in California and nationally that prevent certain groups of reentering people from receiving public assistance. Some examples include:

- CalWorks lifetime ban on food stamps for people with felony convictions for drug-related offenses.
- Elderly people coming out of prison or jail who need significant care, but who are considered by the government not to be severely disabled enough to be eligible for Social Security benefits.
- Elderly people coming out of prison who the government will not grant Social Security benefits because they have not worked for long enough, because they have been in prison for decades.

Even for people who are eligible, they need assistance with understanding their eligibility, how to enroll, renewal deadlines, and other governmental notices. Individuals need help filling out paperwork and getting through the bureaucracy of welfare offices. Lastly, individuals need assistance appealing denials. Without this guidance and support, many people who are eligible and should be on some form of assistance are left without a stable source of income they are actually entitled to under law.

I.J. Need for Financial Literacy Training

Most reentering people lack financial resources. People are unable to make a living wage while incarcerated, and many come from poverty. Many people may have large debts and credit issues. For these individuals, financial literacy, planning, and budgeting are a challenge. Their needs include assistance with opening a bank account, obtaining a credit card, and planning and budgeting their finances.

Debts and fines that arise prior to incarceration, including back-ordered child support, restitution, court fees, and low-level fines and tickets, follow people into reentry. These pose huge barriers to someone trying to achieve financial stability: a person’s wages can be garnished for child support obligations, restitution fines, court fees, and other debts—or risk revocation. When people cannot pay back their child support obligations or other debts, they can be barred from getting a driver’s license, making it harder to apply for a job, and thus forcing them to go into more “invisible” and nonlegal work to make an income.

There are some county resources that provide limited help to people who owe huge amounts of debt post-incarceration. For example, some counties have Homeless Courts, which are a resource for homeless formerly incarcerated people to clear outstanding tickets and debts. Additionally, in some counties, the Department of Child Support Services will help formerly incarcerated parents develop plans to pay back child support over time. However, because people rarely know about these programs, many eligible people miss out on these resources. It is critical to have advocates on the ground referring clients to alternative payment programs. Additionally, people in reentry need advocates helping them negotiate with debt collectors, avoid scams and deceptive advertising, and counseling them on types of safe loans.

I.K. Need for Legal Assistance with Family & Dependency Court Cases

Family support is one of the most important predictor of a person’s successful reintegration into the community, and many returning people cite family support as the most important factor in successful reintegration. Yet family reunification services do not exist for people in reentry. People in reentry need assistance with a wide range of family law issues, such as child custody cases and visitation disputes, adoptions, loss of parental rights, child support orders, spousal support, and divorce actions. Just as finding a job can be the central motivator for a reentering person to get up each day, so can reunifying and connecting with family. Moreover, there are positive benefits to the entire family when a family law issue is resolved, and when a formerly incarcerated parent has shown that he or she is motivated be an integral part of the family.

Men and women typically face different family law issues. Many women have Child and Family Services cases against them pre-incarceration for issues like neglect and child-endangerment, so they struggle

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to regain custody or visitation rights with their children post-incarceration. Some women have lost their children through the foster or adoption systems and are unaware that their parental rights were terminated.\(^{10}\)

While loss of parental rights is final, people whose rights have been terminated still benefit from understanding why and how their rights have been terminated.

Men in reentry often face issues of owed child support, and because of this may be prevented by Child and Family Services from seeing their children when they leave prison. Child Support is not automatically suspended in California upon incarceration.\(^{11}\) While incarcerated parents can petition the family law court to change their child support order, few know about this option. Therefore, when fathers get out, they discover they now owe a huge amount in child support. These fathers do not have access to low- or no-cost legal services to help them modify these debts and orders, and have very little money and wherewithal to pay it back. As a result, they often have their wages (if the person has a job) garnished, leaving them financially desperate.

While there are great needs in this area, few family law attorneys or legal aid programs work with formerly incarcerated people in reentry, especially with men. Pro bono family law programs tend to work exclusively with groups they define as victims of family violence, i.e. victims of domestic violence. Oftentimes, grant money expressly prohibits a program from serving anyone outside of that group. In addition to the lack of funding and support dedicated to family law for reentering people, family law cases are both labor and time intensive, making them an unattractive area to allocate resources.

While many in legal services have hesitation about working on family law issues for formerly incarcerated people because there is so little financial and societal support for this particular issue, family law representation on behalf of returning people could be messaged differently to garner support. The conversation to increase support should focus on the motivation people have post-release to succeed and stability that family networks provide to returning citizens. It should also focus on the disruption that occurs in a child’s life when a parent is incarcerated, the devastating effects it can have on a child’s development, making family reunification, when appropriate, a positive step for both parent and child.\(^{12}\)

Since many public interest attorneys do not have the resources, skills, or grant funding to take on family law cases, they should, at minimum assist people with self-advocacy in the family courts. Most Superior Courts in California have a Family Law Facilitator at the Self-Help Center, where people can learn how to bring their case pro se (without legal counsel).

II. Need for Mental & Medical Health Care

- **Psychological Services**

  Whether arising prior to, during, or after incarceration, many reentering people experience mental health challenges, mental illness, and other forms of psychological distress. It is noteworthy that many formerly incarcerated people report, from their experiences, that the California Social Security office has a presumption that people coming out of prison suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

  If a person struggles with mental illness, it can be particularly difficult for them to stabilize, communicate needs, and access support. One challenge for people in reentry is to get the medications they need. Though jails and prisons are supposed to give all people a 30-day supply of all medications before they

\(^{10}\) In California, a parent can lose parental rights if he or she has been convicted of a felony “indicating parental unfitness” or when an incarcerated parent has “failed to visit or contact the child for 6 months.” See *Grounds for Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights, Child Welfare Information Gateway* (Jan. 2013), https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/groundtermin.pdf; Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code §§ 361.5, 366.26. Therefore, a significant number of parents can and do lose rights from their incarceration. There are very few circumstances allowing a person to reinstate parental rights after termination. See Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 366.26.

\(^{11}\) To learn more about the child support obligations of parents incarcerated in California, see *The Basics of Child Support for Incarcerated Parents, Judicial Council of California*, http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/incarceratedguide.pdf.

are released, many mental health practitioners say that many prisons and jails do not follow this rule, and people in reentry quickly become mentally ill without their medication.

Adding to these issues, many “clean” housing centers will not accept residents into their program if they are taking any drugs, including prescription medications for mental illness, which makes finding clean, safe housing even more difficult.

In order to reduce these obstacles in reentering people’s lives, reentry service groups should connect clients to programs that are supportive of people with mental health issues, refer people for mental health assessments, provide classes that support psychological health and help release unresolved trauma, and advocate for clients to receive the mental health services to which they are legally entitled.

- **Medical Care Services**
  Many reentering people are uninsured and struggle to access medical care and go months or longer without health insurance. Nevertheless, people in reentry are heavy consumers of health services, requiring emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

  The January 2014 implementation of the Affordable Care Act (administered in CA as Covered California) is a shining light for reentry advocates, promising medical coverage to a greater number of low-income people, including those coming out of prison and jail, and expanding Medicaid/Medi-Cal eligibility based on income, with greater coverage for mental health services. Covered California has online tools and phone operators to help people find out if they are eligible for Medi-Cal. Reentry service providers should provide registration for Covered California in-house, or should work closely with groups who can sign people up, setting up ways for their clients to easily get covered.

- **Substance Abuse Treatment**
  People who struggle with substance abuse and alcohol dependency are even more likely to end up back in prison or jail. They face additional barriers in reintegration. While a reentry services group or legal aid organization may not provide in-house substance abuse services, it is important to screen for these issues and connect people with appropriate treatment service providers and housing facilities. Without this support, other forms of assistance like legal and social services will not be very effective.

**I.M. Need for Advocacy with Parole & Probation**

  Newly released people often do not have enough legal information to understand their risks and rights when dealing with law enforcement, parole, and probation. For people on parole or probation, any system involvement—even an arrest—risks revocation. Clients who can better understand the rights and restrictions of state or county suspension can better interface with law enforcement, and are less likely to end up in prison or jail.

- **State & Local Parole**
  In California, parole is a condition of release for most people convicted of felonies and sentenced to state prison. Unlike probation, which is part of an initial sentence when someone is convicted, parole allows an individual’s early release from his or her prison sentence. For those in California sentenced with potential life terms (e.g. “15 years to life”) who complete the determinate or base part of their sentence, the Board of Parole Hearings must determine if a person is ready to reenter society with the Governor’s approval prior to release. A person who is released on parole is then assigned a parole agent who oversees the person’s compliance with parole conditions. Most people are paroled to the county where their commitment offense took place, but that may not be the best county for them to receive services and or the support of family members. Successfully advocating for a change in a person’s parole location can be very difficult, but will have a huge impact on the success of the client. Yet getting parole locations changed is increasingly difficult, as many urban parole departments have closed their doors to new supervisors because of capacity limitations. Both San Francisco County’s and Alameda County’s parole divisions, for example, are closed to new transfers.
Parole holds a great deal of power, control, and discretion over an individual’s life after prison, including what that person can do and where he or she can go. Reentering people often struggle with the arbitrariness of parole’s rules, which differ from officer to officer. One formerly incarcerated individual said that the arbitrary nature of parole feels like “prison without walls.” People on parole report that they have been barred from living with family members without justification, barred from travelling for their job, forced to take down personal blogs, retaliated against for complaints to their officer, and had parole revoked for leaving their house with an ankle monitor to attend a neighborhood social gathering. These types of parole decisions slow the process of reintegration, contribute to high parole revocation rates, and harm reentering people’s sense of dignity. In order to effectuate a culture shift within parole, reentry services organizations and legal aid organizations may want to reach out to the directors of parole departments to discuss ways they can collaborate and make reentry more successful.

Furthermore, it is important for reentry advocates to educate people on parole supervision about both their rights—what they can do—and the real risks they face—and what they cannot do. This will help keep clients out of trouble.

- **Requesting Changes in Parole Locations**
  
  If a person on parole does violate a condition of his or her release, that person faces the risk of having parole revoked and going back to prison. In July 2013, California changed its laws governing parole hearings, so that most parole revocation cases go before a superior court judge instead of the board of parole hearings. Reentry attorneys could represent people on parole at these revocation hearings and/or provide supportive services to panel attorneys appointed to represent their clients. It is still unclear how these new changes will play out and the caliber of attorneys that will be appointed by the courts, so it is a place for legal organizations to look to be involved.

- **Probation and California’s Post-Release Community Supervision**
  
  Unlike parole, probation is a type of original sentence handed down by a judge at trial, often as an alternative to incarceration. Probation allows a person convicted of a crime to remain in a community setting under supervision — either instead of going to jail or prison, or in combination with a short jail sentence. Similar to parole, however, probation comes with conditions that can, in some cases, seriously restrict a person’s freedom of movement and activity.

  There is now a second form of county supervision, called Post-Release Community Supervision (PRCS). In 2011, the United States Supreme Court declared overcrowding in California’s prisons to be cruel and unusual punishment. The court demanded that California reduce its prison population, and the state responded by passing the Public Safety Realignment Act. Under the new law, a person released from a state prison after incarceration for a non-violent or non-sexual crime is not released to parole. Instead, those individuals are placed under supervision by local, county probation officers. In short, Realignment allows counties to decide how to supervise many individuals exiting jails and prisons. Under the new law, if a person on community supervision violates the terms of their release, they do not return to state prison. Instead, local agencies will take on those revocation cases.

- **Federal Probation & Parole**
  
  People convicted of certain federal offenses may be sentenced to federal probation or supervised release. As the community corrections arm of the federal judiciary and an agency of the U.S. District Courts, the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services System oversees federal probation. A much smaller group of people—namely those sentenced prior to November 1, 1987, those who violated laws of the District of Columbia, those convicted of crimes within the military criminal justice system, and people convicted in

certain foreign transfer treaty cases—may still be on federal parole, which the Sentencing Act of 1984 otherwise eliminated.14

I.N. Need for Targeted Services for Populations with Unique Needs

Some interviewees identified sub-populations of reentering people that may require special attention and considerations, including: former gang members, people of color, long-termers, immigrants, youth, women, transgender people, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, veterans, elderly/aging people, people with disabilities, Prop 36 releases, people paroling to rural counties, and people coming out of federal prisons. Members of many of these groups are disproportionately criminalized, homeless, and policed. Reentry practitioners should be aware of the distinct obstacles faced by members of these and other groups, as well as distinct protections and services available for members of certain groups. Reentry advocates should also be engaged in advocating for policies that will meet the unique needs certain groups have.

PART II:

BEST PRACTICES FOR STARTING A REENTRY PROGRAM

Many of the advocates we met with gave advice for how a reentry organization should set up its work. Practitioners gave advice for best practices in five areas: strategic planning & budgeting, programming, staff development, communications and development, and tracking.

II.A. Operational Planning Best Practices

II.A.i. Focus on Strategic Planning & Budgeting

Short- and long-term strategic planning and budgeting are extremely important for the health and sustainability of any nonprofit. By spending a meaningful amount of time planning and developing the organization’s model, staffing and programs, thinking through various funding sources, setting a reasonable multi-year budget, and experimenting early on, an organization will have a stronger foundation in the long term.

A startup should initially set realistic goals for year one, year three, and year five. From there, it should consider revisiting those goals on an annual basis, and doing a deeper review every five years—strategically thinking about the nonprofit’s work, mission, goals, intervention strategies, program model, funding sources etc. Always ask, “Where can our resources be most effective?” A “market scan”—a scan mapping out where and what reentry services exist—helps clarify how and where an organization can best contribute to the reentry services landscape in its area. Lastly, by looking at the gaps in nearby service providers, an organization can use its own expertise and experience to plug those holes. So long as funding is flexible, it is a good idea for an organization to experiment with services and experimental funding models as it attempts to fill in the gaps. Staff can then evaluate and assess the effectiveness of different programs and strategies. Creativity, innovation, and risk-taking are important to any new organization.

II.A.ii. Carefully & Deliberately Choose an Office Location

For any direct service provider, choosing an office location is an important moment in setting up the organization. R&R asked many advocates and practitioners for advice on choosing an office location that would be accessible, safe, and comfortable for people in reentry. Their suggestions included the following:

- Co-locating with other service providers (such as CBOs, probation and parole departments, shelters, drug treatment programs) or being in close proximity to these organizations so that clients can receive multiple services in a single visit.
- Close proximity to public transit and transportation hubs.
- A space that feels safe for transgender, gender variant, and intersex people.
- A space that feels safe for all clients and staff.
- Has private office space for confidentiality.
- Has free parking in the area.
- While you want to be accessible to a large number of clients, service providers should not contribute to the entrapment of disenfranchised people into resource-strapped communities by only located offices within them. To do so opposes social reintegration and reinforces the idea that the clients do not really belong in wealthier communities. Furthermore, many newly released people will not be from the Bay Area, and may not feel ties to any particular city or community here.
- Service providers should consider partnering with legal and social services providers in rural locations and providing monthly clinics in those areas.

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II.A.iii. Hire Strong Core Staff & Focus on Building Their Capacity

In the nonprofit world, staff turnover is a problem facing many organizations—when staff leave, the organization loses institutional memory and expertise. It is therefore important to provide professional development and other support and incentives to attract, develop, and retain quality staff. This could mean providing staff with the ability to attend one or more substantive trainings or conferences each month in an area about which they are passionate. In addition to professional development, a reentry services nonprofit should consider offering staff members financial support for their continued education or other incentives to stay, such as salary increases or increased vacation time or benefits.

II.A.iv. Create a Robust Volunteer Network

By giving volunteers a role within an organization, a nonprofit will build investment from members of the community and multiply its capacity to serve clients. This volunteer network may include private law firms, friends and supporters who have non-legal professional skills to offer, law and social work students, students from undergraduate and graduate school courses, clinics, and student-initiated projects. Supervision is the major challenge when working with volunteer professionals and interns. Some will require significant training and oversight. Nevertheless, with proper screening, interviews, training, and management, a volunteer network can build a much stronger and more robust organization.

II.B. Programmatic Best Practices

II.B.i. Utilize a Holistic Services Model

Any legal or social services organization doing direct services should aim to treat the whole person. This means using a holistic lens to identify the issues and obstacles that a client faces and problem-solve. Because people in reentry have issues across multiple areas of need, a holistic intake assessment is greatly needed in the reentry services sector. Current intake systems that focus only on the discrete issue that a client asks about might miss other major obstacles and issues that are preventing a client from realizing success back in the community.

Although offering a holistic array of services in-house is ideal, it is also extremely difficult. For example, within legal services, it is challenging for attorneys to learn to practice or counsel clients across various areas of law. As one advocate said, the holistic services model is “exhausting, but very rewarding work.” Even with a holistic services model, there will be needs that an organization simply cannot solve because they are outside of its areas of expertise. The difficulty of providing holistic services under one roof gives rise to the need for strong referral networks and collaboration with other groups.

II.B.ii. Employ a Client-Centered Approach & Conduct Focus Groups

Like a holistic approach, the client-centered approach in reentry services also requires providers to see their clients as whole people with rich histories and diverse needs. The client-centered approach is a “response service”—it provides services that directly respond to the needs of individual clients rather than offering a cookie-cutter package of service provisions. Many organizations with a client-centered approach treat the people they serve as “clients for life.” This type of approach involves frequent check-ins and leaves the door open for a client to return for help at any time in the future, even if that means a phone call when the person has moved far away. It also means that when a client falters, advocacy is consistent. One caution that interviewees note with this approach is that some formerly incarcerated clients will have difficulty expressing and prioritizing their needs. In order to support clients who struggle to identify their needs, it is important to have a practice that is trauma-informed, culturally- and age-appropriate, resists stereotypes, meets clients where they are, and works through a client’s narrative.

By definition, a client-centered approach must be client-informed. Focus groups are a helpful tool in establishing this model. An organization should organize focus groups with people who have been through
the reentry process and ask questions about current and past needs: what types of services people encountered, which were beneficial, and which were not. It is important to have a strong facilitator who can transcribe participants’ answers and ask helpful follow-up questions when necessary. After completing a focus group, it helps to review and synthesize what needs the participants communicated and how those needs might affect the organization’s model. Interviewees caution that, in putting focus groups together, an organization should be cognizant of a number of factors. First, it can be difficult to corral formerly incarcerated people because they are working, attending school, and have family responsibilities. Second, many formerly incarcerated people are tired of joining “talking groups” because in the past they have felt used and unappreciated. To solve some of these challenges, it is suggested that the organization covers participants’ transportation costs, provides a meal, and offers a stipend for participants’ time.

II.B.iii. Narrow the Scope of Work

Multiple interviewees—many of whom began their own reentry projects across the nation—advised that a new reentry services organization begins with a narrow scope to its work. Once a reentry services organization opens its doors, it is usually inundated with requests as the need in reentry so greatly exceeds the capacity of service providers. The scope of its work, therefore, must be focused. Defining eligibility for reentry services is always a challenge: inevitably deserving people are left out because the capacity limitations of nonprofit organizations cannot yet meet the need of the enormous population of returning citizens in California. However, when programs are too broad, their quality suffers. While there is disagreement as to the best way to focus and narrow a program, three possible means to do so were suggested: (1) Narrow by population; (2) Narrow by services offered; and/or (3) Narrow by the geographic area served. The decision to narrow services can also provide reassurance to funders that a reentry advocacy group is not trying to do too much.

- Narrow by Population Served

One way to limit the scope of a reentry services organization’s work is to restrict the population it serves. There are many ways the population of eligible clients can be defined: where they were incarcerated, the type of offenses committed, gender, time since last incarcerated, disability status or other special needs, and so on. Interviewees suggested focusing on one of the following subsets of the reentering population: long-termers, who may lack navigational and adaptive skills outside of prison; people coming out of prison under Proposition 36 who are not on parole and have even less access to services; the growing jail population, where there are fewer support programs inside and higher burdens on county jails under Realignment; and youth coming out of the California Division of Juvenile Justice. With a smaller client population, a reentry organization can provide higher quality services to each individual client.

Another mechanism for narrowing the population served is to have strongly enforced eligibility requirements, i.e., guidelines that participants must fall into and adhere to in order to participate in the program. Some suggested eligibility requirements are:

1. Participation in a partnering organization’s complementary reentry program.
2. Low-income.
3. Mandatory attendance at educational workshops.
4. Mandatory commitment to volunteer at your organization or another community agency
5. Nominal “membership” fee to encourage client investment (e.g. $5).
6. Attitudinal requirements (e.g., motivated to succeed).

- Narrow by Services Provided

A second way to limit reentry work is by restricting the kinds of services the organization will provide. By choosing to offer only one or two types of services, a service provider can occupy a niche within the reentry services world and build a strong reputation and expertise with that issue. A legal service office also has the option of offering legal consultation on discrete issues, through legal clinics and other means, without taking on a person’s case for full representation. Some reentry attorneys provide a broad set of civil legal services to formerly incarcerated people, while others believe it is more beneficial to become an expert in
a few areas and refer out other matters. One risk to narrowing the types of services too much is that a reentry services organization can become increasingly less holistic as it limits what services it will provide to reentering people.

- **Narrow by Geographic Location Served**
  A third and final consideration for narrowing reentry services is to restrict the geographical area served. This could mean focusing on only one county’s parole and/or probation populations. One risk to narrowing by geographic area, though, is that it may reinforce the existing fragmentation of county-based services.

**II.B.iv. Conduct Targeted Outreach to Appropriate Clients**

Once an organization narrows the scope of who or where it will serve and has defined eligibility requirements, it should conduct outreach to that specific group. Effective outreach is critical for any organization in order to connect with the clients it hopes to serve. Reentry advocates have many suggested best practices for conducting outreach with potential clients and participants, including:

- Partner with government agencies and other Community Based Organizations (CBOs).
- Adding your organization’s contact information to resource lists kept by prisons and parole.
- Holding workshops at partnering CBOs, government agencies, and inside the prisons and jails.
- Joining local reentry councils and collaborate with other members.
- Attending parole’s community meetings, which are mandatory in CA for people newly released onto parole.
- Hosting community events, lectures, and film screenings for formerly incarcerated people and their families.
- Hosting legal clinics.
- Advertising your work and services through social media.
- Visiting homeless shelters, health clinics, and drug treatment facilities, rather than expecting that clients find you.

**II.B.v. Provide Reentry Planning & Case Management**

It is critical that a reentry organization providing direct services also offers some form of reentry planning. People nearing their release dates and those who are newly released greatly benefit from a step-by-step, individualized reentry plan. A reentry plan should cover all aspects of the client’s life, from socioeconomics to psychological needs, to support the network in place.

For any reentry plan to be effective, there must be an case manager or advocate in place who consistently works with the clients on reassessing, reprioritizing, and adjusting their plan to meet his or her ever-changing circumstances. There also must be “buy in” from the client—the client should be involved in developing the plan with social workers and case managers. Case managers and social workers provide important expertise to the staff at any reentry advocacy organization—they are trained to connect clients with ancillary services and serve not only the clients’ interests, but also those of the client’s family and community. A good case manager or social worker will refer a formerly incarcerated person to appropriate services, follow up regularly on a reentry plan, and help the client set and meet realistic goals that will maximize their opportunities for successful reintegration. A social worker may also be able to help develop and track outcome measures for the organization and provide quasi-legal services, like enrolling clients into public benefits programs and helping clients apply for identification documents. If an organization has both lawyers and social workers on its staff, it must be cautious about what information can be shared across the offices so as to not break attorney-client privilege. Despite issues surrounding client confidentiality, social workers add many indispensible skills to any reentry advocacy organization.
Lawyers, under the professional code of ethics, owe clients absolute confidentiality and must zealously advocate for the client’s wishes. On the other hand, social workers serve not only the best interests of the client, but also the client’s family and community, a different kind of ethical duty.

II.B.vi. Build a Strong Referral Network for Wraparound Services

Since it is impossible to offer every service that a reentering person will need in-house, developing a strong referral network of wraparound service providers is critical. One tenet of the wraparound services model is that every reentering person should get what they need to flourish—both legal and non-legal services—without professional silos and fragmentation getting in the way. Thus, reentry programs should learn the local reentry landscape and ecosystem of service providers, build relationships with organizations that offer high-quality services to reentering people, and know the eligibility requirements for those programs. Starting a strong reentry program will ensure that clients are not left alone to make appointments and navigate referrals. This should be done together. A reentry practitioner should assist clients with calls, especially a newly reentering person, and maybe even accompany with a client to a first meeting with a referral.

II.B.vii. Incorporate Self-Advocacy Tools

For a reentering person to build skills, develop resiliency, and feel empowered to navigate community life, it is important to teach tools of self-advocacy. Within the legal system, there are various ways a person can self-advocate—by going to self-help desks at the courts or filling out and filing legal forms on their own behalf. A reentry advocate can still provide extensive follow-up, asking a returning client questions like “What did the clerk tell you?” and then directing him or her on next steps. While a subset of clients will always need extra support and struggle with self-advocacy—for example, a client who has no English skills, serious mental health issues, illiteracy, and so on—reentry practitioners can help reentering people navigate the system without doing it all themselves.

II.B.viii. Encourage Peer Mentorship

It is incredibly beneficial for people in reentry to learn from people who have been through it, navigated the system, and gained stability across many areas of life such as housing, family, and employment. A program with peer mentorship places people who have been through reentry in leadership and mentorship positions to guide those who come after them. Peer mentors can help their mentees with all aspects of life, including improving guidance with basic life skills like taking public transport, using email and phones, budgeting, and scheduling a weekly calendar. Peer mentors also become an important part of a reentering person’s social network. They are a person—sometimes the only person—he or she can call in a time of need. Since many returning citizens have little to no family or social support, having a person who cares and listens is invaluable.

II.B.ix. Build Clients’ Social Capital

In addition to having a peer to peer model, an organization should connect reentering people to strong social and professional networks. This increases the chances that they will experience real social mobility following incarceration. Reentry advocates can help clients build social capital by connecting them to professional networks and networking events, job training and mentorship programs, and give clients opportunities to speak on panels and at reentry events. A reentry organization should foster leadership and professionalism by holding workshops on how to navigate the professional world, from writing emails and thank-you notes to having business cards.
II.B.x. Engage in Community Organizing and Consciousness-Building

Community organizing can be an important tool for advancing the needs of reentering and formerly incarcerated people. By plugging into grassroots campaigns and community activism, reentry advocates can empower an otherwise disenfranchised group to self-organize and find ways to voice their struggles. Currently formerly incarcerated people are mostly invisible to the general public. By building consciousness and community around issues of reentry among the very people and communities most impacted, power can be shifted away from service providers and attorneys and returned to reentering people. One excellent example of this is one national organization, All of Us or None.

II.B.xi. Promote the Free-Flow of Reentry Information & Resources

In order to meet the needs of the high numbers of returning citizens in their communities, reentry service providers should provide their resources and general information online. This will allow thousands of people annually to access a program’s guides, manuals, and databases, instead of the one or two hundred that might be clients. Access does not just involve putting resources on the web, it includes putting complex information in a simple format and ensuring that it can be as widely understood as possible. Organizations should not only provide information broadly and creatively through blogs, websites, and even smart phone applications, but should also make reentry resources understandable and therefore accessible to the average person.

II.B.xii. Create a Feedback Loop between Direct Services and Policy Advocacy

In order for direct services organizations to have a larger impact, it is important for them to communicate what they see on the ground with policy advocacy organizations. If there are both direct services and policy arms internal to an organization, there should be frequent communication between them. Information gathered from direct service work should also be shared with policymakers at the state or local levels.

II.C. Development & Communications Best Practices

II.C.i. Build a Strong Board

By building a strong board of directors and advisory board, a new organization will position itself to connect with individuals and institutions that would have otherwise been out of reach. Both such boards also should provide a consistent source of expert feedback on the organization’s reentry services model.

➢ The Board of Directors
The board of directors is primarily responsible for nonprofit governance and fundraising. The board should be made up of experts in the reentry field and people with financial and fundraising expertise who are well connected to the world of donors and foundations. A strong board includes individuals who are able to help maintain the fiscal health of the nonprofit and fundraise, provide volunteer leadership, and give feedback on high-level governance and decisions.

As a best practice, interviewees suggested that an organization make efforts to collapse the space between the board and staff members, enabling collaboration and partnership to build between staff and board. The staff should communicate regularly with the board about what is happening on the ground to enhance this collaborative relationship.

➢ The Advisory Board
The advisory board is the ideal place to incorporate people with deep community-based knowledge and reentry services expertise. It is important for a reentry program to be mentored and informed by these experts, including formerly incarcerated people who have been through reentry. The advisory board is a way...
to solidify the mentorship role of people who have been helpful within the organization. Because an advisory board requires less time commitment than a board of directors, it is always wise to offer both positions to a prospective board member, to increase the opportunities for a busy person to be involved in and connected to an organization’s work.

II.C.ii. Acquire Fiscal Sponsorship While Awaiting 501(c)3 Status

Fiscal sponsorship is a great fundraising tool whereby a non-profit organization with 501(c)3 status offers its legal and tax-exempt status to another nonprofit with a similar charitable purpose that has not yet established tax-exempt status independently. Fiscal sponsorship allows a new organization to fundraise and accept tax-deductible donations while its independent 501(c)3 status is pending with the IRS. This arrangement makes donors feel more comfortable making large donations to the nonprofit. The fiscally sponsored organization (the new organization) usually establishes a fee-based contractual agreement with the 501(c)(3) nonprofit sponsor to provide for certain administrative and accounting costs. Some sponsors provide services beyond the fiscal arrangement, as well.

II.C.iii. Focus on Small, Local Foundations for Initial Fundraising

Fundraising is a major issue for any nonprofit to ensure its long-term sustainability and effectiveness. For a new reentry organization, interviewees suggest starting by reaching out to small, local foundations, which are more likely to invest in a new nonprofit with big ideas and dreams but without much of a track record. Large, national foundations tend to fund nonprofit organizations with more of a record, a developed business plan, and plans to create a replicable and scalable model. Additionally, small, local foundations are more inclined to fund direct services, while national, large nonprofits are less interested.

Interviewees shared conflicting feelings about applying to state and government funds for reentry work. The downside is that there are many strings attached to government grants. One example is the federal Legal Services Corporation, which funds most pro bono civil legal service organizations in the country. In terms of state funding, one downside is that state governments often have very different values and priorities for providing services to reentering people than most nonprofit organizations. Another downside to government funding is that, when priorities do line up, this can easily change with election cycles and organizations can end up losing large amounts of funding very quickly.

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15 See 42 U.S.C. 2996 et seq. See also About Statutory Restrictions on LSC-Funded Programs, available at http://www.lsc.gov/media/factsheets/about-statutory-restrictions-lsc-funded-programs. By statute, LSC-funded programs are prohibited from participation in:

- Political activities, including voter assistance or voter registration.
- Criminal cases, except for minor offenses in Indian tribal courts.
- *Habeas corpus* actions challenging criminal convictions against officers of the court or law enforcement officers.
- Organizing activities, including training for-or encouraging of-political or labor activities.
- Proceedings or litigation to procure non-therapeutic abortions or compel the provision of abortion services over religious or moral objections.
- Proceedings involving desegregation of public schools, military service or assisted suicide.
- Lobbying government offices, agencies or legislative bodies except for limited situations.
- Representing people who are not U.S. citizens with limited exceptions such as lawful permanent residents, H2A agricultural workers, H2B forestry workers, and victims of battering, extreme cruelty, sexual assault or trafficking.
- Class actions.
- Soliciting clients in-person.
- Abortion-related litigation of any kind.
- Representing prisoners.
- Representing people who are being evicted from public housing because they face criminal charges of selling or distributing illegal drugs.
- Most activities involving welfare reform.
II.C.iv. Communicate Your Success and Always Track Outcomes

Tracking outcomes is important not only for an organization to assess its effectiveness but also to communicate that success to the general public and its donors. In general, funders deeply value quantitative and statistical analysis that “proves” the social interventions of a program are working. The most sophisticated outcome measurement analysis can come from inviting a neutral third party to conduct an independent review of a program’s success, but an organization can and should track its own outcomes from the very start of working with clients. Interviewees mentioned the following metrics for tracking outcomes:

- **Meeting Clients’ Personal Goals**—Clients’ personal goals and client satisfaction can be tools for measuring a reentry program’s success. You can gather some of this information by asking clients: “Did you gain what you needed to from our support?” “Did I answer your questions?”

- **Client Participation and Retention**—Tracking the quantity and quality of time an organization retains a client for is a cornerstone of success in the reentry field. Research has shown that it is difficult for reentry organizations to maintain client engagement over time, but mentorship and leadership opportunities will assist in this effort. The ability of a reentering person to complete a program, be punctual, and adjust to a more formal structure should all be measured and communicated with supporters of the work.

- **Biographical and Demographic Information**—An organization should collect information about clients’ age, race, gender, family history, history of system involvement, immigration status, income etc. This information will help the organization and its donors analyze how particular populations are impacted by reentry services and interventions and where it needs to improve its work.

- **Becoming a Productive Citizen in the Community**—Instead of treating success as a lack of something (e.g., not recidivating), reentry success should be defined as when clients affirmatively accomplish something, such as giving back to the community. These affirmative success measures focus more on the individual person and how they become change agents in their communities.

- **Legal & Advocacy Outcomes**—Certainly for a legal services organization, it is important to measure what the outcomes of specific legal interventions were and how those interventions had broader social impacts on a reentering person’s life. One way to track this information is to keep track of (1) clients’ issues walking in, (2) court outcomes (e.g., whether a court case was won, a petition or an appeal granted, etc.), and (3) improved outcomes in the client’s life (e.g., finding a full-time job, returning to school, reuniting with family members, improving their health, accessing services, signing up for public benefits, becoming a leader in the community, and other positive life outcomes).
CONCLUSION

Across California and around the nation, people are starting to wake up to discover the failings of our criminal justice system for the last 40 years, and the problems with our longtime approach of incarceration of the masses over rehabilitation. We are beginning to understand that when we fail to support rehabilitation during incarceration, and then again fail to provide services in reentry, the same patterns of homelessness, mental health issues, poverty, and re-incarceration arise. In order to provide strong and powerful reentry services and support, we must recognize the systemic, political, and individual factors that feed incarceration. These factors must be taken into account to support a person throughout the reentry process—from pre-release into a stable, productive, and valued life in society.

While by no means exhaustive, this report, through interviews and the voices of over 70 practitioners, advocates, and returning citizens, outlines the major needs and obstacles that may arise in reentry. It also explains how one can start or grow a reentry program to support returning citizens to overcome these barriers and maximize their opportunities for a true restart in life. We hope that it inspires the reader to think not only about how to improve his or her individual efforts, but also about how we can collaboratively work to more strongly support returning citizens throughout the reentry continuum.
APPENDIX A

List of Practitioners and Advocates Interviewed for this Report

Formerly Incarcerated Advocates:
1. Connie, Trainee, Homeboy Industries (Los Angeles, CA)
2. David, Trainee, Homeboy Industries (Los Angeles, CA)
3. Dominique, Trainee, Homeboy Industries (Los Angeles, CA)
4. Michael, Trainee and Tour Guide, Homeboy Industries (Los Angeles, CA)
5. Steve Avalose, Reentry Support Staff, Homeboy Industries (Los Angeles, CA)
6. Jason Bell, Executive Director, ASI Project Rebound at San Francisco State University (San Francisco, CA)
7. David Cowan, Operations Associate, Prison University Project (San Quentin, CA); Director of Reintegration and Founder, Alliance for CHANGE (San Francisco, CA)
8. Jerry Elster, All of Us or None (based at Legal Services for Prisoners with Children) (San Francisco, CA)
9. Alton McSween (“Coach”), Reentry Program Coordinator and Case Manager, California Reentry Institute (Clayton, CA)
10. Joseph (Joe) Miles, ASI Project Rebound at San Francisco State University (San Francisco, CA)
11. Airto Morales, Data Specialist, ASI Project Rebound at San Francisco State University (San Francisco, CA)
12. Leonard Rubio, Executive Assistant, Prison University Project (San Quentin, CA); Co-Chair of Board of Directors, Insight Prison Project (San Rafael, CA)

Social Service Providers:
1. Demetrius Andreas, Vice President, Community Reentry Services, HealthRIGHT 360 (Los Angeles, CA)
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