

Restore Justice Foundation

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://restorejustice.org/about-us/resources/reentry/>

Policy Issue Resources

The end of a prison term marks the beginning of a new and often difficult chapter in the life of a returning citizen. For those who return after serving twenty years or longer, barriers to finding housing and employment compound with the unfamiliarity of a world that runs on smart phones, email, and all manner of other conventions that inmates have little to no exposure to behind bars.

A number of organizations in and around Chicago offer aid and programs to returning citizens. These services include everything from housing help and job training to legal aid for expunging of records.

With a big hand from John McLees at [Incarceration Reform](#), Restore Justice has compiled a number of these sources below. We'll also update this page semi-regularly with new resources.

[Cara Chicago](#) runs a full-time training program and directly employs returning citizens through two transitional job programs: [Cleanslate](#), which focuses on maintenance, landscaping, and snow removal; and [Cara Connects](#), a contract staffing firm that fills short-term, entry level positions in industries as wide-ranging as food service, hospitality, healthcare, and warehousing.

Location: 237 S Desplaines St, Chicago, IL 60661 (West Loop) & 4655 S. King Drive, Chicago, IL 60653 (Fuller Park)

Contact: 312-798-3300

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) runs a [Second Chance program](#) to returning citizens who were incarcerated for nonviolent crimes. After completing a 4-6 week training program, participants may be employed full-time by CTA for up to 12 months. If vacancies are available, participants may then be considered for permanent hire. To participate, job seekers must first complete a job readiness program at one of 14 civic organizations around Chicago, including Cara, Safer, and the Howard Area Community Center.

Location: NA

Contact: 312-681-2293

The [Howard Area Community Center](#) (HACC) provides a number of training programs for returning citizens. Their [Employment and Resource Center](#) offers a general fresh start training program that includes resume writing, interview practice, and networking with employers as well as a reentry program that pairs returning citizens with case managers. Staff at HACC also visit incarcerated people while they are still in prison to answer questions about the re-entry process. Incarcerated people are welcome to contact HACC staff about this service.

Location: 7637 N Paulina St, Chicago, IL (Howard)

Contact: 773-262-3515

The [Greater West Town Community Development Project](#) offers two job-training programs: one in [woodworking](#) and one in [shipping and receiving](#). Skills taught through the woodworking program include furniture-making, precision measuring, and machine operation. Participants in the shipping program will be taught shipping procedures, forklift operation, and other skills and will also receive aid in job placement and retention support. While not free, financial aid is available for those who qualify.

Location: 500 N Sacramento Blvd, Chicago, IL 60612 (Humboldt Park)

Contact: 312-432-9595

[Inspiration Corporation](#) offers a free 12-week [food service training program](#) for returning citizens that provides kitchen training and culinary instruction along with services related to overcoming criminal backgrounds, homelessness, and other obstacles.

Location: 4554 N Broadway, Suite 207, Chicago, IL 60640 (Uptown)

Contact: 773-878-0981

The [Lutheran Social Services of Illinois](#) (LSSI) provides returning citizens with a [number of services](#), including employment training, job opportunities, and general information and referral for needs ranging from education and housing to family relations. They run a 23-day program for general employment skills such as resume writing and interviewing and offer opportunities to work in community gardens as transitional employment.

Location: 1001 E Touhy Ave, Suite #50, Des Plaines, IL 60018

Contact: 847-635-4600

The [North Lawndale Employment Network](#) runs multiple programs for returning citizens to find work. These include [U-Turn Permitted](#), a four-week job readiness training program for individuals with felony background. They also run [Self-Employment Pathways for Women](#), a job readiness program for returning women that teaches the skills needed to run a small business.

Location: 1111 S. Homan Ave, Chicago, IL 60624 (Lawndale)

Contact: 773-638-1825

The [Safer Foundation](#) provides career training and transitional jobs. Safer also runs a [clothing assistance program](#) for returning citizens who need business attire for an interview and offers [one-on-one financial assistance](#) for issues including tax preparation, debt reduction, and medical bills.

Location: 571 W Jackson Blvd, Chicago, IL 60661 (West Loop)

Contact: 312-922-2200

The [Michael Barlow Center](#) run by [St. Leonards Ministries](#) offers jobs training, placement and retention services to returning citizens. The Centers job [training programs](#) are industry specific and include a 10-week program for building maintenance, an 11-week program in food service, and others. Graduates of these programs can then receive assistance from the Centers [Employment & Retention Specialist](#) for job referrals and other job-securing aid.

Location: 2120 W Warren Blvd, Chicago, IL 60612 (Near West Side)

Contact: 312-226-6270

[Teamwork Englewood](#) runs a [Reentry Resource Center](#) for returning citizens. While the Center focuses primarily on housing, substance abuse and mental issues, and sealing or expunging of criminal records, Teamwork Englewood also runs a Workforce Development Program that offers resume writing, job readiness skills, interviewing, and placement opportunities.

Location: 815 W 63rd St, Chicago, IL 60621 (Englewood)

Contact: 773-488-6600

The [Westside Health Authority](#) (WHA) offers free employment-related services to returning citizens. These include everything from [resume and job placement assistance](#) to [haircuts and substance abuse counseling](#). Every Friday, WHA runs a Job Club that puts employers and returning citizens in the same room to talk about new jobs and even run onsite interviews.

Location: 5051 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60651 (Austin)

Contact: 773-378-1878

In February 2018, Restore Justice (RJ) created the first Returning Citizens Network (RCN). RCN meetings are held monthly in Chicago. The meetings are led by Restore Justice staff and attended by recently Returning Citizens who were incarcerated for lengthy adult sentences as youth.

These Returning Citizens served decades in the Illinois Department of Corrections and share many similar experiences. RCN hopes to provide the opportunity and space for these individuals to come together to share personal experiences and feelings, coping strategies, and first-hand information about the challenges they face re-entering society after such long periods of incarceration. Some of the goals of RCN are peer support, networking and locating the resources Returning Citizens need to lead positive and productive lives.

Some of the topics that have been discussed at past meetings include meeting basic needs, sharing job leads, finding available community resources, and engaging in advocacy and civic engagement. Many of the group participants have hit the ground running, by immediately getting involved in community organizing and criminal justice reform following their release.

In the future, the Returning Citizens Network plans to host events and outings where members can share their stories, develop leadership and advocacy skills, engage in self-care, and improve their skills to cope with everyday challenges.

If you, or someone you know, would like to join our growing network of Returning Citizens, please call (312) 809-6992 and ask about the Returning Citizens Network or email info@restorejusticeillinois.org.

Restore Justice Foundation
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Submit your email address to be notified of crucial legislative action items, fundraisers, and news about our progress.

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