



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

# ROADMAP TO REENTRY

REDUCING RECIDIVISM THROUGH REENTRY  
REFORMS AT THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS

APRIL 2016

*“Supporting successful reentry is an essential part of the Justice Department’s mission to promote public safety — because by helping individuals return to productive, law-abiding lives, we can reduce crime across the country and make our neighborhoods better places to live.”*

*“An important part of that task is preparing those who have paid their debt to society for substantive opportunities beyond the prison gates, and addressing obstacles to successful reentry that too many returning citizens encounter.”*

- Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch  
National Reentry Week Announcement  
April 2016

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## **ROADMAP TO REENTRY**

### **REDUCING RECIDIVISM THROUGH IMPROVED REENTRY OUTCOMES AT THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS**

#### **Overview**

Each year, more than 600,000 citizens return to neighborhoods across America after serving time in federal and state prisons. Another 11.4 million individuals cycle through local jails. And nearly one in three Americans of working age have had an encounter with the criminal justice system—mostly for relatively minor, non-violent offenses, and sometimes from decades in the past. Federal prisoners are held at the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), a law enforcement agency of the U.S. Department of Justice and the country’s largest and most complex prison system—housing nearly 200,000 prisoners in 122 federally-operated correctional institutions, 13 privately-operated secure correctional facilities, and a network of more than 175 community-based centers around the country.

Reflecting on the size of the American prison population, Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch has stated:

Sometimes the sheer size of these numbers ... blunts our sensibilities to what they truly represent: people. Every number is a person. Behind every person is a family and surrounding every family is a community. These are people who could contribute to our economy, who could support their families and who could transform their communities into better places to live. If we are truly going to make the most of this precious resource, this human capital, we must ensure that these individuals have the tools and the skills and the opportunities they need to return to their communities not just as residents, but as leaders; equipped not only to survive, but to succeed. We must ensure that our returning brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers—our fellow Americans—can truly return home.

The long-term impact of a criminal record prevents many people from obtaining employment, housing, higher education, and credit—and these barriers affect returning individuals even if they have turned their lives around and are unlikely to reoffend. These often-crippling barriers can contribute to a cycle of incarceration that makes it difficult for even the most well-intentioned individuals to stay on the right path and stay out of the criminal justice system. This

cycle of criminality increases victimization, squanders our precious public safety resources, and wastes the potential of people who could be supporting their families, contributing to the economy, and helping to move our country forward.

Under the Obama Administration, the Department of Justice has already taken major steps to make our criminal justice system more fair, more efficient, and more effective at reducing recidivism and helping formerly incarcerated individuals return to their communities. In 2011, the Department established the Federal Interagency Reentry Council, a unique Cabinet-level effort to remove barriers to successful reentry. The Reentry Council, which now includes more than 20 federal departments and agencies, has developed significant policies and initiatives that aim not only to reduce recidivism, but also to improve public health, child welfare, employment, education, housing, and other key reintegration outcomes.

To ensure that all justice-involved individuals are able to fulfill their potential when they come home, Attorney General Lynch has launched a major effort to support and strengthen reentry programs and resources at BOP. These principles of reform—known as the **Roadmap to Reentry**—will be implemented throughout BOP, deepening and further institutionalizing the Department's commitment to reentry. These efforts will help those who have paid their debt to society prepare for substantive opportunities beyond the prison gates; promoting family unity, contributing to the health of our economy, and sustaining the strength of our nation.

The Department has also established full-time positions to promote reentry work at BOP, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, and the Office of Justice Programs; this includes hiring the first-ever Second Chance Fellow—a formerly incarcerated individual with deep expertise in the reentry field—to assist in development of reentry policy initiatives. BOP established a new Reentry Services Division to better equip inmates with the tools needed for success outside the prison walls, including expanded mental health and substance abuse treatment programs and improved work and educational opportunities. Through the community of U.S. Attorneys, the Department participates in reentry and diversion courts in more than 50 judicial districts nationwide. And the Department supports state, local, and tribal reentry efforts by providing resources under the Second Chance Act of 2007: the Department's Office of Justice Programs has made nearly 750 Second Chance Act grants totaling more than \$400 million, and established a National Reentry Resource Center that serves as a one-stop resource for returning citizens, advocates, and stakeholders.

In 2013, the Department launched the *Smart on Crime* initiative—reorienting our federal prosecution priorities to make better use of our finite resources and to more equitably apply the law. The results have been very encouraging: Department prosecutors are charging fewer mandatory minimums and focusing on more serious drug offenders; plea and cooperation rates are undiminished; and, after nearly 40 years of growth, the federal prison population has declined for the second consecutive year. But, to truly serve the public good, the Department cannot only be concerned with innovations related to prosecutions and entry into the criminal justice system; we must focus on those who are leaving it as well.

Throughout its history, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has been committed to the dual mission of operating institutions that are safe, secure, and humane, and providing the treatment, training, and life skills that inmates need to be productive, law-abiding citizens after release. By implementing the principles laid out in this Roadmap, we can better prepare motivated individuals to

successfully reenter society; we can reduce crime across the country; and we can make our neighborhoods better places to live, work, and raise our children.

## Principles for Improved BOP Reentry Practices

The Roadmap to Reentry identifies five evidence-based principles guiding federal efforts to improve the correctional practices and programs that govern the lives of those who will reenter society after incarceration. **The Department of Justice takes the view that “reentry begins on Day One.” And, just as important, our involvement does not end at the prison gates.** As such, these corrections principles span the cycle of custody and beyond: from intake, to incarceration, through to release. The principles are as follows:

**Principle I:** Upon incarceration, every inmate should be provided an **individualized reentry plan** tailored to his or her risk of recidivism and programmatic needs.

The Department embraces a corrections philosophy that reentry preparation must begin on the first day of incarceration. The first, and most important, step in reentry planning is obtaining information about an individual’s risk of recidivating and programmatic needs that can inform the development of an individualized reentry plan. This assessment—which is currently under development at BOP—should include a review of the key information about an incarcerated person’s criminogenic needs, such as criminal history, substance abuse history, and education level.<sup>1</sup> After such an assessment, an incarcerated person should receive an individualized case plan, designed to help corrections staff deliver targeted services and programs necessary to reduce the inmate’s likelihood of recidivism and support each inmate’s successful reintegration upon release.

**Principle II:** While incarcerated, each inmate should be provided **education, employment training, life skills, substance abuse, mental health, and other programs that target their criminogenic needs** and maximize their likelihood of success upon release.

**Evidence-based Programs.** Recidivism risk can be effectively reduced through proven evidence-based programming that targets individuals’ criminogenic needs, such as courses on anger management, parenting, and cognitive behavioral therapy. The curricula for these programs should be grounded in hard evidence that the program reduces recidivism, rather than speculation about a program’s positive outcomes or a desire to keep inmates busy while in prison. Moreover, there should be standardization of evidence-based programming across facilities so that an inmate can complete programs even if they are transferred from facility to facility.

**Education.** Low levels of education achievement are directly tied to higher rates of recidivism. To remedy gaps in education and employment skills, prisons must ensure its education programs are grounded in a concrete, evidence-based strategy that will expand the quality, scope,

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<sup>1</sup> Criminogenic needs are characteristics, traits, problems, or issues of an individual that directly relate to the individual’s likelihood to commit another crime, such as low levels of educational and employment performance, or substance abuse.

and delivery of the agency's academic and job training curricula, particularly for those with literacy and special learning needs.

**Job Skills.** Providing inmates with vocational training is critical to helping them find a job upon release, which is one of the most effective ways to reduce recidivism. For example, Federal Prisons Industries (FPI) is a voluntary industrial work program housed within BOP that helps federal inmates develop essential life skills and provides them with sustained job training. FPI is BOP's largest reentry program and has a superb record of reducing recidivism. The Department has hired a new CEO to shape and lead FPI's business strategy and to execute transformation and cost containment initiatives that will strengthen FPI for years to come.

The Department, through BOP, has launched an effort to assess its education programs, life skills programs, and job skills programs to ensure these programs are evidence-based and targeted to the criminogenic needs of inmates.

**Principle III:** While incarcerated, each inmate should be provided the **resources and opportunity to build and maintain family relationships**, strengthening the support system available to them upon release.

Research shows that close and positive family relationships reduce recidivism, improve an individual's likelihood of finding and keeping a job after leaving prison, and ease the harm to family members separated from their loved ones. To help ensure that all returning citizens have a robust support system, prisons must have significant opportunities for family engagement. To this end, BOP is:

- Expanding an existing pilot program that provides **video services for visitation** (videoconferencing) to BOP female facilities by June 2016, and developing an implementation plan to expand the video services visitation program to all BOP facilities.
- Launching a **children of incarcerated parents pilot program** at four BOP facilities. BOP is working with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention on this program, which engages children of incarcerated parents in positive youth development activities and includes their parents in these activities. \$1.3 million in grant funding was awarded to service providers in September 2015, and the programs are scheduled to begin in June 2016.
- **Issuing best practices guidance and training** for BOP staff regarding interacting with children in a developmentally appropriate way during visitation and creating visiting spaces at BOP facilities that are welcoming to children.

**Principle IV:** During transition back to the community, halfway houses and supervised release programs should **ensure individualized continuity of care** for returning citizens.

Individuals experience the highest risk for recidivism in the first days, weeks, and months

immediately following release from custody. Providing continuity of care and support during this important reentry time period is crucial to preventing individuals from reoffending.

Upon release from federal prison, more than 80% of individuals who return to U.S. communities reside at Residential Reentry Centers (RRCs), also known as halfway houses. RRCs play a central role in federal reentry strategy because they help stabilize the newly-released individual as he or she readjusts to life outside of prison; seeks employment, housing, and healthcare within the community; strengthens his or her relationships with family members and others; and faces a host of reentry challenges. As such, RRCs should be held to the highest standards for improving the experience of residents during the critical first weeks and months outside prison.

In order to ensure that RRCs are fulfilling their vital role in the reentry process, the Department, with assistance from outside consultants, is undertaking a robust evaluation and assessment of the RRC experience to develop a specific plan for implementing improvements to the existing RRC model that will provide residents enhanced reentry support and reduce recidivism.

**Principle V:** Before leaving custody, every person should be provided **comprehensive reentry-related information and access to resources** necessary to succeed in the community.

Providing useful information and meaningful guidance to newly-released individuals—many of whom have spent years or decades in prison—is essential to reducing the likelihood that they will struggle during their transition and reoffend. For this reason, the Department has coordinated a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary effort to:

- Reduce barriers to reentry. In her capacity as chair of the **Federal Interagency Reentry Council**, Attorney General Lynch has worked to remove federal barriers to successful reentry so that returning citizens are able to compete for a job, attain stable housing, support their children and their families, and contribute to their communities.
- Reduce barriers that interfere with a person's ability to secure **valid government-issued identification** upon release. To this end, Attorney General Lynch has asked every state governor to accept BOP identification as a predicate for obtaining state-issued identification upon release.
- Publish a new **standard reentry manual** that provides specific, detailed instructions and advice on issues commonly experienced during reentry that will be provided to all U.S. citizens leaving federal facilities. The reentry manual was printed by inmates working in the FPI program.
- Launch a new **reentry services hotline (1-877-895-9196)** to provide assistance to recently released individuals. This hotline is staffed by inmates working in the FPI program who are specially-trained to provide assistance to recently released federal inmates as they navigate various reentry challenges and seek community resources.

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Each year, some 40,000 individuals are released from the Federal Bureau of Prisons. By issuing this Roadmap to Reentry and working vigorously to enhance federal reentry practices, the Department of Justice reaffirms its view that each and every one of the individuals committed to custody at BOP presents us with an opportunity to turn around a life, avoid a future victim, repair a family, and support a community. All of these individuals deserve the federal government's best efforts to help them start anew when they return home.

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