



Justice: Release, Reentry and Reintegration

Start Date July 1, 2020

System Gap Addressed

- There are approximately 2.2 million adults in the U.S. prison system, of which an estimated 750,000 are individuals with disabilities. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2015, 32% of federal prisoners and 40% of people in jails self-identify as having a disability.
- People with disabilities face a higher risk of entering the justice system than people without disabilities.
- Incarcerated people with disabilities need training in skills to successfully reintegrate into society, and time served should become time for preparation.
- A report by the North Carolina Sentencing and Advisory Policy Commission (April 2018) indicated that, of 47,613 individuals released or on probation from the NC state prisons between 2013 and 2015, the recidivism rate was 41%. These statistical reports present gender and ethnicity/race-related data but lack disability-related data.
- Legislation and initiatives to set the stage for a more successful reentry system include the NC Justice Reinvestment Act (June 2011), the State Reentry Council Collaborative (2017) and the North Carolina Reentry Action Plan (February 2018).

Initiative Goals and Timeline

- The purpose of this initiative is to improve transition outcomes after incarceration for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD).
- This initiative focuses on recidivism reduction (rearrest, reconviction or reincarceration) by expanding successful practices for reintegration into the community from incarceration for individuals with I/DD.
- Transitioning into and living in the community with the supports and services necessary to thrive is a component of this initiative.
- The goal for this initiative is to reduce the recidivism such that at least 80% of participants live in the community successfully for 7 years following release, at least 80% will secure a job interview, at least 80% will complete a travel training program and at least 80% will express satisfaction with peer support services.

Description of Activities

- Establish and develop in-reach activities and begin preparing participants for release.
- Identify 3 to 4 state prisons that will allow the contractor (the Alliance of Disability Advocates) to work with medium to close custody inmates.
- Develop a Stakeholder Advisory group.
- Work directly with program participants. Program participants will experience:
 - Culturally competent (inclusive, diverse) skill-building and support programming.
 - Personal and service network building, including peer support.
 - Continuity/seamless support of needed services.
 - Accessibility advocacy, advocacy to remove stigmas and reduce the barriers to successful reentry.
 - Research supported well-being and esteem-building strategies.

Justice: Release, Reentry, and Reintegration (continued)

Achievements and Outcomes to Date

- Initiative staff have taken Reentry Monthly Training and received an invitation to attend the Governor's Reentry Council meetings.
- Through previous reentry work, developed relationships with federal probation and parole officers in the Triangle region and the Orange County Commission for Reentry.
- As a result of these relationships, received referrals for post-release individuals from state prisons in the Triangle region.
- Made a presentation to representatives from the North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS) and its Division of Adult Prisons.
- Convened meetings of the initiative's Collective Impact Council in September and November 2020 and January and February 2021 with representatives from NCDPS and NCCDD.
- A *Spectrum News* story on December 30, 2020 featured the Alliance of Disability Advocates' justice work, including a mention of this initiative: <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nc/charlotte/news/2020/12/30/disability-advocacy-group-revamps-prison-reentry-program#>
- The initiative received its first referral for a pre-release individual in January 2021.
- Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, initiative staff cannot currently enter prisons but are awaiting introductions to the warden of the Pender County Prison and the Women's Prison in Raleigh. Also exploring a potential partnership in Pender County and surrounding areas.

Expected System Change as Result

- More individuals with I/DD and other co-occurring disabilities will successfully reintegrate themselves into the community with more supports after incarceration and fewer instances of recidivism.
- North Carolina's prison system will have a model with culturally competent success plans to study and the right partnerships and collaborations in place to help prisoners with disabilities successfully reintegrate into the community.