

# At·A·Glance



The Annie E. Casey Foundation

## COMING HOME: From Prison to the Community with the Help of Faith

**Every day, children and families** in many of the most disadvantaged communities in the U.S. face the joy and challenge of welcoming home the more than 650,000 men and women released from prison each year. Most of these formerly incarcerated people are parents. Many have been confined for non-violent crimes. And while people of color make up just over one-third of the total U.S. population, almost two-thirds of the state prison population, and 59 percent of the federal prison population, are made up of people of colour.

**A**s the correctional system continues to be overloaded, many formerly incarcerated people are released without institutional support to ensure transition to the community as responsible family members, reliable employees and productive citizens. This transition is made particularly difficult as former prisoners attempt to reconnect with families, find housing, work, and access necessary substance abuse and health treatment.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation recognizes the complex set of problems re-entry represents for former prisoners, their families and communities, and is interested in the unique role faith and communities of faith – clergy, people of faith, congregations and faith-based organizations – play in helping people make their way back into the legal community.

Casey's interest stems from a desire to understand how resources are mobilized on behalf of vulnerable populations – single parents and their children, prisoners and their families, immigrants and refugees. Casey recognizes that in the case of the incarcerated, it is not only the person incarcerated who needs support, but also the families left behind. The social costs of incarceration are also born by the families and children. Without sufficient supports, two-thirds of former inmates will be rearrested for a felony or a serious misdemeanor within three years.

# 1,700

people  
return to the  
community  
from prison  
every day



Casey believes that vulnerable populations require support to change the odds for their success and is exploring ways to understand and best address the needs of former prisoners and their families.

Casey recognizes that the partners in the *Making Connections* sites from our Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development Initiative have an important role to play in helping vulnerable populations in their communities. Former prisoners and their families need support, and faith-based organizations in *Making Connections* sites are uniquely placed to provide some of the supports and services needed. Successful reintegration requires identifying barriers to re-entry and developing creative approaches and partnerships to remove these barriers.

In an ideal criminal justice system, a comprehensive array of programs and services would be available to prisoners while incarcerated, and to prepare people to return to their families

and communities. Programs and services would also be available to their families and communities. Children, in particular, need community support because parental separation resulting from imprisonment can have profound consequences. Shame, social stigma, changing caregiving arrangements, loss of financial support, weakened parental ties, poor performance in school, increased delinquency, increased risk of abuse and neglect – can all result from a parent's incarceration. In some cases

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### ► Quick Facts

- 300,000 households with minor children have a father in prison
- almost 80 percent of inmates enter prison with substance abuse problems, but only 10 percent report receiving professional substance abuse treatment while incarcerated
- Over 50 percent of fathers and mothers who are incarcerated report never having a visit from their children during their incarceration

parental rights are terminated and children are placed in foster care.

To explore the role that faith and communities of faith currently play in prisoner re-entry, Casey commissioned several projects: *Outside the Walls: A National Snapshot of Community Re-entry Programs*, a national media outreach campaign; *God and the Inner City*, a PBS documentary featuring faith leaders and re-entry programs; *From the Inside Out*, a paper on the role mainstream, orthodox Islamic organizations play in supporting prisoners and their families in the U.S.; *Back into the Fold*, the role Christian service providers play in helping former prisoners make their way back into the community; *Transitions from Prison to Community*, a report documenting the experiences of incarcerated men and women returning home, and the Islamic organizations in African-American communities that support them.

The Foundation views such efforts as an investment in assisting communities and agencies identify untapped resources and initiatives that can provide the supports, services and economic opportunities necessary for vulnerable populations to successfully integrate into their families and communities. This paper shares some of the key strategies and models faith-based organizations are using successfully to assist former prisoners and their families make the transition home.

## Why focus on re-entry?

**D**ecreased funding for parole and probation services means many former prisoners leave prison to return home without institutional support to readjust to life in the community. Almost two-thirds of former prisoners are likely to be rearrested within three years of their release for a technical or parole violation. It's not surprising. Of the more than \$22 billion spent on state prisons for adults in 1996, only \$1 billion was spent on preparing prisoners for life outside the walls.

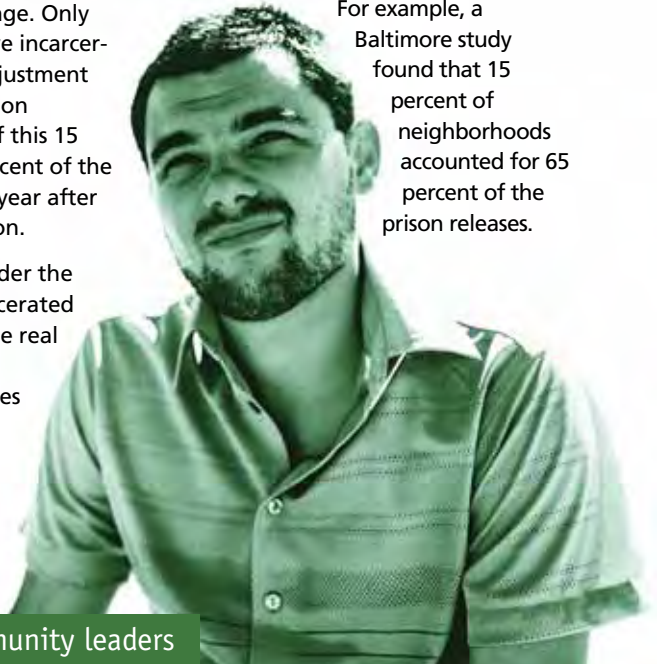
Since many prisoners serving lengthy sentences serve their time more than 100 miles away from their families, in rural areas poorly serviced by public transportation, they may not see their children the entire time they are in prison. Incarceration puts pressure on all relationships, including marriage. Only 15 percent of marriages survive incarceration of one spouse. The readjustment after release also takes its toll on marriage and relationships. Of this 15 percent, only three to five percent of the couples are still together one year after the spouse's release from prison.

Nearly 2.4 million children under the age of 18 have a parent incarcerated in a state or federal prison. The real social and economic cost for vulnerable children and families is enormous. Former prisoners often have limited human capital – a median education level of 11th grade; few vocational skills; a history of

unemployment prior to arrest; and substance abuse issues. They often have damaged family relationships and come out of the criminal justice system with a stigma that doesn't go away – a stigma that attaches itself to the whole family. Restoring connections with families and children can be difficult and everyone involved needs help and support.

The job of a community – raising children, providing a sense of security and pride, providing a healthy environment for families, providing jobs – is greatly impacted when large numbers of people, including young people, are going in and out of the criminal justice system. Some communities are affected more than others. Many former prisoners return to urban areas that are already socially and economically disadvantaged.

For example, a Baltimore study found that 15 percent of neighborhoods accounted for 65 percent of the prison releases.



### ► Important questions for *Making Connections* sites and community leaders

- 1 Based on research, what populations are most likely to return to prison and what can faith-based organizations do to support them – before they end up in prison?
- 2 How many former prisoners are returning to your community, and where are they finding supports and services for housing, job placement, family counseling, substance abuse treatment and/or health care? If you don't know, who can you work with to find out? (Note: Many *Making Connections* sites are involved in the Urban Institute Re-entry Mapping Project through their local learning partnership.)
- 3 What kind of support services do former prisoners returning to your community need most? What organizations in your community provide these services?
- 4 How can your *Making Connections* site work together with other faith-based and secular groups that deliver services to former prisoners and their families?
- 5 How can *Making Connections* partners work with men and women on probation and parole to give them the support they need so they don't re-offend?
- 6 What community engagement strategies would be most effective to reduce incarceration rates in your community?
- 7 How can a *Making Connections* site team facilitate peer networking with other organizations providing support services to former prisoners and their families?
- 8 How can a *Making Connections* site team facilitate peer networking with other organizations providing advocacy related to re-entry issues – restoring voting privileges, and providing adequate pre- and post-parole services to former prisoners and their families?
- 9 How can *Making Connections* site teams share what they learn with other *Making Connections* site teams?

# ▶ ▶ ▶ Promising practices and models

Many practices and programs exist that are making a difference in the lives of ex-prisoners, their families and communities. Contact information is provided below.

## AMACHI

Public/Private Ventures  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
(215) 557-4400

A partnership that includes churches, the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Association, and Urban Civil Society and the Robert A. Fox Leadership Program at the University of Pennsylvania, and Public/Private Ventures. It offers community-, school- and church-based one-on-one mentoring for children of incarcerated parents.

## Community Re-entry

Cleveland, Ohio  
(216) 771-8611  
[www.charityadvance.com/lutheranmetro/communityre-entry.asp](http://www.charityadvance.com/lutheranmetro/communityre-entry.asp)

Religious organizations from various faith traditions supply mentors for ex-prisoners. The program also offers job placement, job training, parenting classes, GED preparation, housing referrals, clothing and transportation assistance and more.

## Conquest Offender Reintegration Ministries

Washington, D.C.  
(202) 723-2014  
[www.conquesthouse.org](http://www.conquesthouse.org)

An interdenominational organization that was started by people from the Mennonite Church and today, is not affiliated with any one denomination. It provides support services to ex-prisoners and at-risk youth, with the long-term goal of helping prevent crime and reduce recidivism.

## Islamic Society of Greater Houston

Houston, Texas  
(713) 524-6615  
[www.isgh.org/new/index.htm](http://www.isgh.org/new/index.htm)

An Islamic organization, it serves the spiritual and cultural needs of a growing Muslim population and provides them with a political voice in the Houston community. Prison da'wah services include education, correspondence, toll-free numbers and symposium.

## Masjid al-Islam

New Haven, Connecticut  
(203) 777-8004

Part of a multi-purpose Islamic organization, it educates the New Haven community about Islam, increases the economic success of its membership and builds networks with other Islamic organizations. Prison da'wah services include education, support groups, counseling programs, and community involvement.

of prisoners enter  
prison with  
substance abuse  
problems



## Liberty Ministries

Schwenksville, Pennsylvania  
(610) 287-5481  
[www.libertymin.org](http://www.libertymin.org)

Non-denominational organization founded by several Mennonites that serves people in prison and on the street by sharing God's love, encouraging Biblical standards of justice and providing a nine-month residential program. The program provides a structured environment and life skill classes.

## Prodigal Ministries

Louisville, Kentucky  
(502) 775-0026  
[www.prodigalministries.org/prodigal](http://www.prodigalministries.org/prodigal)

A non-profit Christian ministry that is part of the Fourth Avenue United Methodist church in Louisville. This organization aids former prisoners through mentoring, Christian counseling, support groups and employment assistance.

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## R.E.S.T. Philly

House of Corrections  
Administration Building  
Philadelphia Prison System  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
(215) 685-8149  
[www.restphilly.com](http://www.restphilly.com)

Non-denominational, the program is based on Christian principles and belief in a Higher Power. A spiritual, rather than a religious program, it helps inmates, ex-prisoners and others overcome self-destructive behavioral patterns, and equips the faith-based community to minister to troubled people.

## Wholeway House

Willis, Texas  
(936) 856-9683  
[www.wholeway.org](http://www.wholeway.org)

An independent residential Christian program that works with local congregations to provide a worship base and mentoring for ex-prisoners. This program helps ex-prisoners build healthy relationships, find gainful employment and participate in ministry to others.

59% of parents with children in the child welfare system require substance abuse treatment



## Recovery @ Work

Atlanta, GA 30316  
(404) 370-0123  
[www.recoveryconsultants.org](http://www.recoveryconsultants.org)

A faith-based social entrepreneurship venture/apprenticeship program designed to provide employment training in residential and commercial painting, lawn care, home repair and pressure washing. The program also trains people in recovery to become certified as addiction counselors, as well as links substance users in need of services to alcohol and drug treatment programs. Recovery @ Work trains faith institutions to identify, cultivate and expand resources among their congregations.

## Women at the Well House Ministries

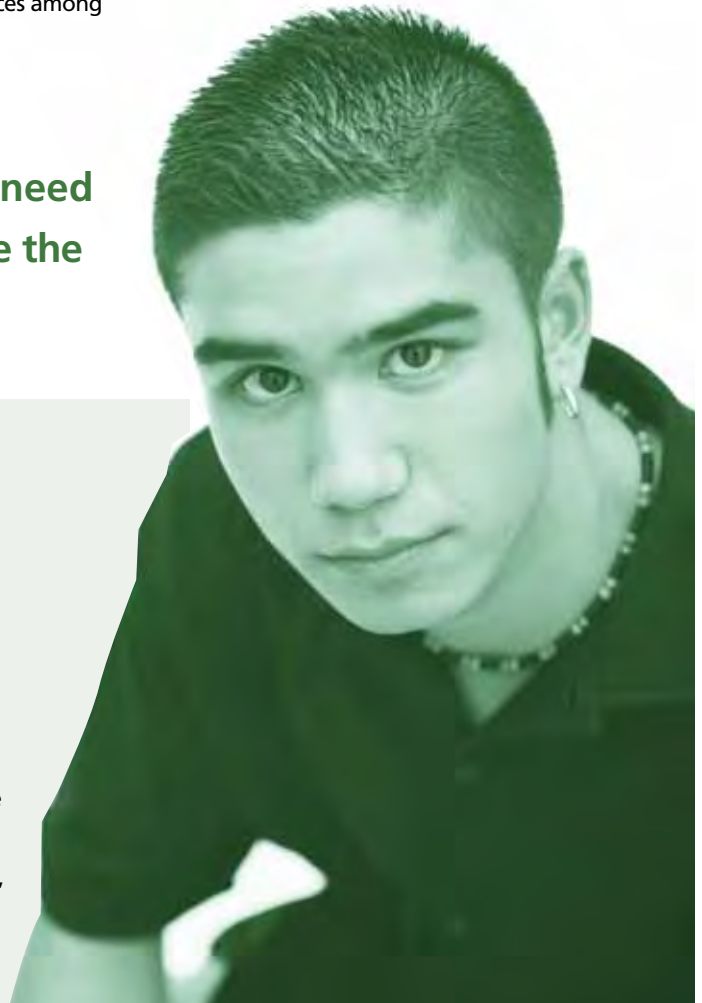
San Antonio, Texas  
(210) 471-2787

A non-profit organization that provides services to female prisoners released from the Texas State Prison system and the local county jail. It provides spiritual and emotional support, and addresses gender-specific issues around physical and sexual abuse.

**There's still a significant need for continuing care once the prisoner is released.**

### The Casey Point of View:

- Families and children of prisoners should not be punished or suffer collateral damage.
- Once a person serves their time, they should not continue to be punished.
- Successful reintegration begins in prison and in the homes of families who have lost a member to prison.
- Neighborhoods of return require both support and voice.
- The vantage points, voice and assets of returning former prisoners are critical for success.
- Success will require that the up-front odds are changed by alternative, non-discriminating practices.



# Addressing the problem, fulfilling the need

The void resulting from limited parole supervision and public aftercare programs for former prisoners is one that a number of faith-based organizations are filling. Beyond the provision of food, shelter, clothing and workforce development, faith-based service providers provide structure, caring, hope, support and unconditional love that may not be available elsewhere.

## Strategies for change

Existing Muslim and Christian programs that support prisoners and former prisoners have found the following strategies assist former prisoners re-enter the community.

### Incorporate Christian or Islamic teachings and practices and start with the prisoner while still incarcerated

- Accept prisoners and former prisoners as they are, responding to their individual needs and don't judge them
- Make a round-the-clock commitment as former prisoners work to reintegrate themselves into the lives of their families and the community
- Offer toll-free phone numbers so prisoners can stay in touch with religious organizations
- Offer unconditional love regardless of the person's past actions
- Advocate for prison reform, voting rights for former prisoners, ending policies and practices that hinder former prisoners from obtaining housing and employment

### Strengthen social networks among former prisoners, families and communities of faith

#### While in prison

- Provide educational courses that teach prisoners how to value their spouse, children and community, and live a devout life
- Provide classes on goal planning and parole planning
- Offer counseling to help prisoners deal with unresolved emotional issues
- Provide a list of congregations and faith-based programs in their communities that they can attend after release
- Provide information that emphasizes morality and societal responsibility, and helps prisoners look beyond the individual-level impacts of their actions
- Create newsletters and magazines that offer the community a glimpse

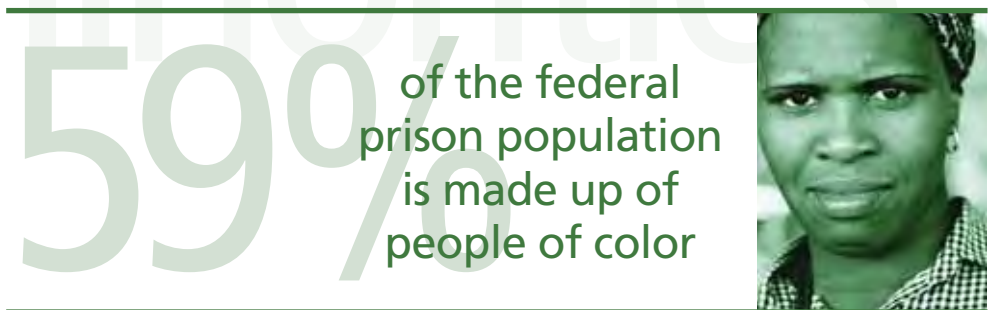
into the lives and experiences of prisoners, publishing articles and poems by inmates, so the community can become aware of, and understand, prison life

- Correspond with prisoners to help them understand Christian or Islamic philosophy, the practice of prayer and other spiritual disciplines
- Upon re-entry*
- Provide re-entry support groups that offer former prisoners counseling, support from peers, and opportunities to create social and economic networks with volunteers and community members

- Provide re-entry support groups that offer networks focused on encouraging job search and placement
- Seek out people of faith with hiring policy decision-making and advocacy rules for incarcerated people

### Build capacity among faith-based organizations

- Identify what is already offered in the community and complement these services, filling the gaps in service delivery
- Network among organizations providing services for this group
- Join forces to eliminate redundancy and work more efficiently



- Provide opportunities to check in with former prisoners regularly – giving them a place to talk about their struggles and accomplishments
- Offer counseling as to how to re-enter the lives of their children and parenting classes to improve their parenting skills
- Provide premarital counseling for couples considering marriage
- Help address material needs of former prisoners to help them maintain a law-abiding life, including transportation assistance, mentoring, employment and housing
- Connect former prisoners who reintegrate successfully into the community with young people who are in danger of offending

### Provide economic success strategies for former prisoners and their families, particularly housing and employment assistance

- Provide assistance finding housing or provide halfway houses so former prisoners have a place to start their re-entry back into the community
- Assist former prisoners in employment search and placement, and life and job skills training

- Collaborate to establish a continuum of after care for former prisoners and their families in the areas of prisoner correspondence
- Share knowledge at conferences and symposiums
- Attend inter-faith conferences that offer a venue for exchange of perspectives and ideas among faith-based organizations
- Learn from the experience of others, particularly on issues related to the unique "faith factor" of faith-based programs

### Foster leadership development among clergy, laity and members

- Provide education and training for volunteers to better understand the effect prison life has on inmates, families and their service needs
- Convene conferences that bring together religious leaders to share strategies and approaches to help former prisoners, their families and communities
- Develop the knowledge and skills to advocate for reforms related to incarceration and former prisoner rights
- Provide access to technical assistance that includes grant writing, and volunteer recruitment and retention

# The role of faith-based organizations

Given the rising number of prisoners and former prisoners, and the decreased funding available for re-entry support, faith-based organizations – both Muslim and Christian – have become vital service providers for men and women while in prison, and after returning to their families and communities. Faith-based organizations are uniquely positioned to support prisoners during and after their prison terms.

In general, Christian interventions live out the principles of reconciliation with God and others through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a changed lifestyle. The Christian re-entry service providers studied in *Back into the Fold* are clear about the religious and spiritual motivations for their work. The programs believe that a relationship with God is foundational, and that it provides the power former prisoners need to make and sustain lifestyle changes that help them avoid re-incarceration.

In a study of 887 congregations in Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania researchers discovered that one in five congregations provide prison ministries; one in 10 provide programs for prisoners' families; one in 20 manage half-way houses for former prisoners; and one in 20 work with youth offenders. While there is no shortage of congregations ready to hold worship services and Bible study for prisoners, there is still a significant need for continuing care once the prisoner is released.

Good works are a fundamental part of the Islamic faith. Islam is an Arabic term that means "surrender" or "submission" to God, and someone who submits to Allah is called a Muslim. For orthodox Muslims, the religious concept of da'wah motivates them to engage in good works. Prison da'wah programs are driven by the belief that da'wah work helps prisoners re-assimilate into their communities, benefiting the prisoner, his or her family and the community.

Many Christian former prisoners come out of prison with a renewed faith, having experienced a religious transformation while incarcerated. For Muslims, individuals tend to convert based on rational information, rather than spiritual awakening. As a result, many da'wah programs offer religious classes that teach prisoners how to live according to Islamic tenets and become productive human beings.

By 2010

# 10,000,000

children will have a parent who has been in custody at some point in their childhood.

In a national study of 130 predominately African-American masjids, about 90 percent report active involvement in prison ministries and re-entry programs. In the Interdenominational Theological Center [Project] 2000 survey of black churches conducted by Gallup, 46 percent of the churches reported outreach to prisons, compared to 20 percent of white churches surveyed.



The information in this document comes from a number of research reports that were funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation over the past year, including:

- *Outside the Walls: A National Snapshot of Community Re-entry Programs*
- *God and the Inner City*, a PBS documentary
- *From the Inside Out*
- *Back into the Fold*
- *Transitions from Prison to Community*
- *Families Left Behind: The Hidden Costs of Incarceration and Re-entry*

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## The Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for vulnerable children and families in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, and his siblings, who named the foundation in honor of their mother.



The Annie E. Casey Foundation

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