

RESEARCH & ACTION BRIEF

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# Back into the Fold: Helping Ex-Prisoners Reconnect through Faith

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From Conceptualization  
. . . to Utilization

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## PREFACE

Each day, children and families in many of the most disadvantaged communities face the daunting challenge of welcoming home the 1,700 fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and friends that are being released from prisons. And as the correctional system continues to be overloaded, many ex-prisoners are released without institutional support to ensure transition to the community as responsible family members, reliable employees and productive citizens. Stunned by the prevalence of re-entry and its impact on children, families and communities, national and local leaders are exploring ways to understand and address the service needs of ex-prisoners and their families.

In 2002, the U.S. Department of Justice's announcement of 68 grants totaling \$100 million for its "Going Home" initiative signaled national interest in improving services for ex-prisoners. One year earlier, the Annie E. Casey Foundation recognized the complex set of problems re-entry represented for ex-prisoners, their family members and communities by commissioning research on faith-based re-entry programs. The Foundation viewed such work as an investment in assisting communities and agencies to identify untapped resources and initiatives that can provide the supports, services and economic opportunities necessary for the successful reintegration of ex-prisoners.

Faith-based organizations comprise one example of institutions that can provide new support, social networks and services to orient ex-prisoners toward a positive lifestyle. Without such institutions, ex-prisoners often re-associate with old friends and revert to old habits and a continued life of crime and punishment. Without such institutions, ex-prisoners experience restricted access to many services — housing, substance abuse treatment, health care, employment, and educational opportunities.

By exploring the service needs of ex-prisoners and providing a preliminary scan of the promising practices of Christian service providers, we hope to discover new and

complementary ways to address the challenges faced by ex-prisoners, their families and communities. It is our hope that the work conducted by the *Program for the Study of Organized Religion and Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work* is an important step in recognizing the contribution of the faith-based community in assisting the process of re-entry for ex-prisoners.

This work will offer clergy, faith-based practitioners, policy-makers and funding agencies examples of faith-based practices and strategies that seek to strengthen the connections among ex-prisoners, their children, families and communities.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to Prison Fellowship Ministries, an outreach for prisoners, ex-prisoners, crime victims and their families founded by ex-prisoner and former Nixon Administration member Chuck Colson, “The road home is possibly the most difficult journey an ex-prisoner will ever make.” This is a challenge that record numbers of men and women face as over 600,000 inmates are released from prisons each year. This is an unprecedented number — about 1,700 people a day returning to their communities. With decreased funding for parole and probation services, many ex-prisoners leave prison to return home without the institutional support to readjust to life in the community. Ex-prisoners seeking successful reintegration encounter a number of challenges, from the behavioral and circumstantial factors that led to imprisonment, to the difficulties of prison life and the other invisible punishments they face once released. While thousands of congregations and faith-based groups take part in traditional prison ministry including visitation and providing spiritual activities such as worship and Bible study, few sponsor programs to welcome ex-prisoners into their fold once they are released from prison.

*At the end of 2001, state and federal prisons together housed over 1.3 million people, with local jails housing 631,240 more — a fourfold increase from 1973. While minorities make up only 37 percent of the total U.S. population, almost two-thirds of the state prison population and 59 percent of the federal prison population are comprised of minorities. Data from 1996 show that of the \$22 billion spent that year on state prisons for adults, only six percent — or just over \$1 billion — was used to prepare prisoners for life outside prison through educational programs, social activities, psychological treatments and recreation.*

This report, based on a literature review and interviews with 10 Christian re-entry service providers, begins by supplying background information and context for this study. We then discuss the consequences of imprisonment and provide relevant statistical data that addresses issues impeding the re-entry process. This is followed by a discussion of how Christian faith-based organizations assist ex-prisoners to restore spiritual, family and

community connections. We also highlight several areas for further study and have included 10 summary profiles of promising practices.

We applied two key methods of study. First, we identified available literature on prisoners and issues related to re-entry. Second, we contacted experts in the field, searched databases, and used a snowball sampling procedure to select faith-based providers of inmate and ex-prisoner services. We focused on Christian, grassroots programs that contribute to family strengthening and reintegration of ex-prisoners into the community. Of the providers selected, three exclusively serve men, two exclusively serve women, and five serve both men and women.

While the clergy and faith-based service providers we interviewed approach reintegration from different perspectives, faith plays an essential role in how they carry out their work. At a minimum, their beliefs inspired the development of their programs and those beliefs continue to motivate their service. Some have no requirement about their clients’ personal religious commitment; other groups are explicitly evangelistic; still others require clients to have undergone a religious conversion before being accepted into the program. Many service providers incorporate prayer, religious education and other related activities into their programs. The faith element shapes many clients’ efforts to become established in the community and avoid further imprisonment. Some of our interviewees were ex-prisoners who have become law-abiding citizens who credit their re-entry success to religious transformation.

In an effort to give the client a good start in the re-entry process, some providers focus heavily on spiritual disciplines. Others concentrate primarily on immediate needs, such as finding housing and employment, or ongoing processes, such as restoring family relationships and overcoming addictions. Some begin working with prisoners before their release and maintain contact with clients well after they have completed post-release services. Some providers address community related

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issues. Many providers collaborate with local congregations or other social service agencies. These services are all rendered within the framework of the particular religious beliefs of each organization.

While there are a number of Christian organizations assisting ex-prisoners with reintegration, the research in this area remains limited. This study contributes to knowledge development in this area by highlighting the following:

1. **Service and resource limitations:** Many Christian service providers reported limited financial resources and paid staff. In fact, most Christian re-entry programs are staffed primarily by volunteers. With such limited personnel and funding, it was not surprising that these programs are less likely to serve ex-prisoners with communicable diseases, histories of violent crimes or sex offenses, or severe mental illness.
2. **Limited parole supervision:** Many of the clients come to these programs without parole supervision or requirements. As a result, the service providers and clients have limited support from the criminal justice system to ensure successful re-entry. Therefore, faith is viewed as a strong motivator for sustained change.
3. **Client self selection:** The client pool is largely comprised of ex-prisoners who voluntarily seek faith-based service providers. As a result, the inclusion of religion is generally accepted, if not welcomed, by those who have already made a profession of faith and/or are willing to incorporate religious beliefs into their lives as a path toward lasting change.
4. **Increasing female incarceration rates:** With the noted rise of incarceration among women, more services are needed for women and children.
5. **Housing:** Locating affordable and appropriate housing is often a great challenge for ex-prisoners, particularly those with severed family relationships. This being the case, they are at risk for becoming homeless or returning to a life of crime.
6. **Measuring outcomes:** In most instances, the service providers studied had not measured recidivism rates, employment rates, or other factors that indicate successful re-integration, such as increased participation in community organizations, religious institutions, schools and family life.
7. **Coordination of services:** The literature suggests that recidivism is more likely to be curtailed when ex-prisoners attend pre-release rehabilitation or education programs followed by supportive re-entry programs that provide a range of services. But most programs focus on either prisoners or ex-prisoners and few programs offer both pre-release and post-release services. Few service providers work with other providers to ensure that a set of comprehensive post-release services are available.
8. **How faith matters:** The Christian interventions studied were characterized by a variety of faith expressions, ranging from services provided by faithful people and church attendance, to evangelism and religious education. Additional research is needed to assess the unique contribution of the Christian aspects of the programs.

# 1

## PART ONE: BUILDING CONNECTIONS





## BUILDING CONNECTIONS

### Severed Connections: When the Rules are Broken

#### By the numbers

At the end of 2001, state and federal prisons together housed over 1.3 million people, with local jails housing 631,240 more — a fourfold increase from 1973.<sup>1</sup> Minorities are disproportionately represented among people in jail. While minorities make up only 37 percent of the total U.S. population, almost two-thirds of the state prison population and 59 percent of the federal prison population are comprised of minorities.<sup>2</sup> This includes those identifying themselves as African American, Hispanic and a race other than white. Similarly, African Americans (44 percent) and Hispanics (21 percent) are disproportionately represented among those returning home from prison.<sup>3</sup> From 1986 to 1990 to 2001, the female prisoner population significantly increased from 19,812 to 44,065 to 94,336.<sup>4</sup>

Given the rising number of prisoners and ex-prisoners, faith-based organizations have become vital service providers for men and women returning to their families and communities.

#### The cost of incarceration

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice, the 1999 expenditures for corrections totaled just over \$49 billion, a more than five fold increase over 1982 levels.<sup>5</sup> In 1996, the average cost of housing a federal prisoner was \$23,500, while a state prison inmate cost \$20,100 to house.<sup>6</sup> These amounts, comparable to the cost of tuition at a prestigious university, far exceed the TANF allowance for a mother with two children, or the cost of public education. While a substantial amount is spent per inmate, only a small portion of that amount is spent on rehabilitative efforts.

*Data from 1996 show that of the \$22 billion spent that year on state prisons for adults, only six percent — or just over \$1 billion — was used to prepare prisoners for life outside prison through educational programs, social activities, psychological treatments and recreation.<sup>7</sup>*

#### Returning to the community

Travis and his colleagues defined re-entry as the process of leaving prison and returning to their family, the labor force, the community and the greater society.<sup>8</sup> Between 1985 and 2000, the number of inmates released from prison more than doubled — from 260,000 to 585,000.<sup>9</sup> Approximately 600,000 people will be released from prison this year.<sup>10</sup> This is an unprecedented number—about 1,700 people a day returning to their communities.

While the number of people released from prison has been increasing, the budgets for probation officers have been decreasing nationwide. At the same time, prisoners who complete their full sentences are released unsupervised. In 1990, only 16.3 percent of ex-prisoners had no conditions attached to their release; by 1998, this group grew to 22.4 percent.<sup>11</sup> With the limited supervision for ex-prisoners after release from prison, other formal and informal supports are being sought to support successful re-integration. This is one of the reasons, our interviewees noted, that chief probation officers in many counties are interested in collaborating with faith-based re-entry programs.

#### Unprepared for re-entry

Ex-prisoners returning to their families and communities often possess limited human capital, having a median education level of 11<sup>th</sup> grade and few vocational skills. Many were unemployed or only partially employed before being arrested, or held a position paying less than \$1,000 a month. Many have used illegal drugs. The National Institute of Justice's Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program reported in 2001 that 63.5 percent of newly arrested males tested positive for marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, opiates or PCP.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the particular actions leading up to incarceration, certain aspects of prison life and its consequences, along with circumstances in an ex-prisoner's personal life, also complicate re-entry into the community. Not only are family relationships and friendships damaged, future housing, career options and standing in the community are all adversely affected by a



person's conviction and incarceration. These issues create a need for intensive support if the ex-prisoner is to reintegrate successfully, restoring broken connections to family and community, and forming new connections that will encourage and reinforce positive lifestyle changes. Otherwise, ex-prisoners are at risk for homelessness, unemployment, continued substance abuse and a cycle of incarceration.

*Successful re-entry benefits ex-prisoners as well as their children, family and community. Expected outcomes are increased participation in family life, the labor force, schools, religious institutions and other community organizations, as well as reduced recidivism.*

### **Likelihood of success**

Successful reintegration of ex-prisoners seems to be the exception, not the rule: nearly two-thirds of those released from state and federal prisons are likely to be rearrested for a felony, misdemeanor or parole violation within three years of their release.<sup>13</sup> Ex-prisoners can be unprepared for the challenges of avoiding re-incarceration while seeking housing, employment, renewing family relationships and friendships, and resolving behavioral and health issues. When they fail to reintegrate successfully, it presents a problem not only for them individually, but for their children, their families, their communities and for law enforcement.

Some of the people who are most successful in their work with ex-prisoners have served time in prison themselves and, as a result, have a clear understanding of the issues their clients face and the level of support they need. The Christian re-entry service providers who are also ex-prisoners are living testimony to the positive and lasting impact of religious intervention and transformation on the reintegration process. Having experienced punishment for criminal acts, many ex-prisoners leave prison to face severed and significantly strained relationships. Christian re-entry programs provide the services to assist ex-prisoners to identify what isn't working in their lives and to reconnect with

God, their children, families and communities. However, in comparison to the thousands of groups who visit or contact prisoners while they are incarcerated, there appear to be few programs geared toward helping ex-prisoners in the difficult transition of re-entry.<sup>14</sup>

### **Broken relationships: Impact on families**

Physical and social distance creates barriers in maintaining relationships with children and family members during incarceration. A prisoner serving a sentence of less than two years may remain in a local jail, usually within the same city where the crime occurred. But those who receive sentences of two or more years are taken to state or federal prisons that can be 100 miles or more away from the prisoner's home — or even in another state.<sup>15</sup> These prisons are often located in areas that are poorly served by public transportation. The distance and lack of public transportation can create barriers to visitation. For example, Route 15 in North Central Pennsylvania houses four state and federal prisons between Lewisburg and Williamsport. Many inmates in these facilities are from Philadelphia or Pittsburgh, or places farther away. In cases where the barrier of distance cannot be overcome, the prisoner maintains connection with family and friends through telephone calls and letters.

### **Prisoners, their children and families**

Nearly one and a half million children under the age of 18 have a parent incarcerated in a state or federal prison.<sup>16</sup> The Department of Justice reported that 44 percent of the fathers and 64 percent the mothers lived with their children before incarceration. But more than half of all prisoners (54 percent of females and 57 percent of males) have not been visited by their children since entering prison.<sup>17</sup> Sixty-five percent of female prisoners have a child under the age of 18.<sup>18</sup> Unlike male prisoners, female prisoners generally keep in contact with their children and want to be a regular part of their lives. Maintaining a relationship with children during imprisonment is a challenge, especially in cases where the children do not have other caretakers when a mother

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is sentenced. In these cases, children may be declared eligible for adoption, especially if the child is young and no father or grandparent claims guardianship.

Incarceration also endangers marriages. According to Prison Fellowship Ministries, only 15 percent of marriages survive a period of incarceration of one spouse.<sup>19</sup> The readjustment after release also takes its toll on marriage. Of this 15 percent, only three to five percent of the couples are still together one year after the spouse's release from prison. In general, families experience social stigma and loss of emotional and financial support.

### Broken trust: Impact on the community

*The increased rate of imprisonment and re-entry over the past two decades have significantly weakened the capacity of many communities, especially some of the most vulnerable, to carry out successful civic life.*

The tasks for which communities are known, such as raising children, providing a sense of security and pride, providing a healthy environment for families, providing jobs, and sustaining open exchanges and support, are hampered when large numbers of the population, including young people, are going in and out of correctional facilities.

### Some communities more affected than others

The re-entry of ex-prisoners is not evenly distributed amongst communities.<sup>20</sup> In our interviews, it became clear that certain neighborhoods experience a greater proportion of people who are arrested, imprisoned and then return to the community. Incarceration and re-entry also have significant impact on a few area neighborhoods in a few urban counties. Often high concentrations of prisoners return to urban areas that are already socially and economically disadvantaged. Such neighborhoods often lack the formal social and economic infrastructure to work with ex-prisoners on re-entry issues. A study in Baltimore found that 15 percent of the neighborhoods accounted for 65 percent of the prison releases.<sup>21</sup>

Unsuccessful re-entry in these communities affects not only public safety, but also the overall quality of life for families and communities. Finally, the social cost of releasing ex-prisoners without adequate supervision, services or supports becomes an expense borne by individuals as well as their children, families and the community as a whole.

### Broken dreams: Impact on the future

Prisoners are released with the hope of transitioning into permanent housing arrangements and work opportunities. But two-thirds of prisoners released from state and federal prisons are rearrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within three years.<sup>22</sup> About half are re-convicted and about two-fifths return to prison. Statistics show that 94 percent of 18- to 24-year-old ex-prisoners with 11 or more prior arrests are likely to be rearrested within three years of release.

*The first six months after release is the period when ex-prisoners are most likely to commit new crimes. This critical transition period is when the most help and guidance are needed.*

### Community services for prisoners

Cnaan and his Penn colleagues found that more than 2,000 congregation volunteers in the Philadelphia area visit prisoners. Of the 887 congregations interviewed:

- 21 percent provided prison ministries;
- 10.6 percent provided programs for prisoners' families;
- 4.4 percent managed half-way houses for ex-prisoners; and
- 4.1 percent worked with youth offenders.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, Rev. Nick Barbetta, Director of Chaplains at the Philadelphia prison system, observed that while there is no shortage of congregations prepared to hold worship services and Bible studies for prisoners, there is a great need for continuing care once the prisoner is released. For ex-prisoners to receive the support they need, the

general population needs to overcome their general distrust and become more sensitive to the issues confronting ex-prisoners.

One of the most popular publications of the Conquest Offender Reintegration Ministries (CORM), *Equipping Your Church to Minister to Ex-prisoners*, provides information designed to motivate congregations to serve in this area. The organizations we interviewed recognize the potential advantages to prisoners, their families and society as a whole when they partner with prisoners before and after their release to facilitate successful re-entry into the community.

### **Added challenges to re-entry**

Despite the services available, ex-prisoners still experience the loss of rights and privileges taken for granted by many citizens. For example, some states have implemented legal barriers to full citizenship for ex-prisoners.<sup>24</sup> In Florida, ex-prisoners lose their right to vote permanently; other states have temporary restrictions on voting. Several states prohibit ex-prisoners from being elected to public office or holding employment in the public sector. Most states impose restrictions on the hiring of ex-prisoners in fields such as law, education, real estate, nursing and medicine. In addition, landlords may be prohibited from renting to ex-prisoners who were convicted on assault or drug-related charges. Many more employers and landlords personally elect not to deal with this population, and reject an individual's application upon finding out about any criminal history. With their options limited, some prisoners welcome assistance from re-entry service providers as their release date approaches, and some faith-based organizations are ready to offer that assistance.

### **Restoring Connections: Christian Interventions**

The words of Jesus, "...I was in prison, and you came to Me..." as recorded in the New Testament of the Bible,<sup>25</sup> are ones that Christian organizations do not take lightly, and that many seek to apply through regular outreach to prisoners and ex-prisoners. 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 leaders who establish these organizations often have a passion or calling to work with ex-prisoners. But these programs don't work with everyone who is referred or who seeks enrollment. The programs typically screen prospective clients and enroll those who express a sincere desire to change their lifestyle and who appear ready to commit to program requirements. Often clients are exposed to evangelism during imprisonment and have already made some faith decision before seeking aftercare services. For example, Conquest Offender Reintegration Ministries in Washington, D.C., accepts non-religious and non-Christian clients, but has found that many clients seek out its program because it is Christian. While some prisoners use religion as a ploy to obtain parole or a special status in prison, once enrolled in the re-entry programs, they often decide they are not suited for these programs and decline service.

In addition to their own selection criteria, all programs have to comply with neighborhood restrictions and work within the limitations of the capacities of their staff and their facilities. They prefer ex-prisoners who are considered less threatening, and those whom the local community will tolerate. As well, many faith-based residential programs believe they are not suited to receive people with HIV/AIDS or other communicable diseases.<sup>26</sup> Their facilities are not equipped with the necessary medical and technical supplies, and those that run communal residences may not be able to ensure the health of other residents. In general, the providers included in this report appear to have limited contact with ex-prisoners with severe mental health issues, communicable diseases, or convictions for sex offenses or violent offenses.

### **Pre- and post-release activities**

The pre-release activities of service providers in this study include:

- establishing rapport with designated clients;
- assessing a prospective client's spiritual commitment; and
- engaging clients in religious activities.

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Several of the programs studied provide a wide complement of post-release services. For example, T.E.A.M. Mentoring, Inc. was carefully designed to be inclusive of all people facing serious struggles in our society, including people who are homeless, drug and alcohol addicts, ex-prisoners, and dependant families including families of prisoners and ex-prisoners. The ministry's focus is currently on the men and women being released from incarceration who have indicated they would like to turn their lives around in the context of living out their faith. The services provided include mentoring, housing, employment assistance, education and support in reconnecting with family. Unlike most of service providers studied, the Re-entry Prison and Jail Ministry serves both ex-prisoners and other service providers. Acting as a clearinghouse, it offers training to service providers and disseminates information via its web site. As a direct service provider, the Re-entry Prison and Jail Ministry offers mentoring, legal support, family support services and advocacy.

### Connecting with God: Meeting spiritual needs

The Christian re-entry service providers we studied are clear about the religious and spiritual motivations for their work. Their clients are aware that they employ Christian principles in their programs. Whether or not they have specific religious requirements or expectations for their clients, these providers share the belief that a relationship with God is foundational, and that it provides the power ex-prisoners need to make and sustain lifestyle changes that will help them avoid re-incarceration. The providers express their faith to clients through the process of meeting their needs, in the course of relating to them as mentors, and in some cases, when describing program requirements.

Two examples of service providers that emphasize the religious and spiritual dimension of their service are Liberty House and Conquest Offender Reintegration Ministries.

### Case Examples

Most of the programs in this report work more extensively with clients after release, assisting them with issues such as securing housing and employment, strengthening family relationships, receiving spiritual and emotional support, and maintaining a law-abiding lifestyle. In the **Liberty Ministries** pre-release program, participating inmates live together in a special part of the prison, and volunteers work with them five nights a week to prepare them for release.

**Liberty House**, part of Liberty Ministries of Schwenksville, Pennsylvania, does not accept persons charged with violent offenses or sex offenses; furthermore, the Chief of Police and a local committee of residents review prospective residents.

The **House of Hope of Alachua County** in Gainesville, Florida, had to obtain the consent of neighbors before establishing the program in a residential community. The community residents accepted the program on the condition that no sex offenders would be in residence. Neighbors of the House of Hope did not object to inclusion of ex-prisoners convicted of violent crimes. **R.E.S.T. Philly** in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania offers 12 to 24 weeks of "Rational Emotive Spiritual Therapy" to prisoners.

**Liberty House** calls itself a "Christian home" for ex-prisoners who are serious about starting a new life in Christ. Residents are expected to be committed Christians who take part in religious activities such as prayer, church attendance, and Bible study. Residents are required to memorize a scripture verse each week and quote their verse at dinner each night; they also must keep journals for scripture memorization and personal reflections. For one ex-prisoner who came to Liberty House, the program has paid off. José Moctezuma worked closely with the director to accomplish monthly goals. He is described as an "exemplary resident." Moctezuma advanced to Phase II at Liberty House, which includes living in a two-bedroom apartment on the property with another resident. He began working as a box handler and applied to be a sales representative for the company. He joined a Baptist church outside of Philadelphia. Moctezuma likened Liberty Ministries and Liberty House to "...a boot camp, preparing me, molding me and shaping me for the future that God is planning for me."

**Conquest Offender Reintegration Ministries** is explicit about being a Christian program, but accepts people from any faith tradition. Louis Jones of CORM believes the most effective way of sharing his faith with clients is through building relationships based on love and respect. He wants clients to become believers, but he is primarily motivated by his own faith to serve them, regardless of whether they believe as he does. CORM services incorporate biblical principles. As such, CORM volunteers and staff share their faith by sending evangelistic materials to inmates in prison, praying with inmates and ex-prisoners, sharing scriptures, praying during support groups, teaching biblical principles, and hosting musical concerts that include calls to the Christian faith. All Christian clients are expected to fellowship with a local Bible-believing church of their choice.

### **Connecting with self: Meeting physical and emotional needs**

A large part of work with ex-prisoners involves helping them take care of themselves — to provide their basic physical needs such as housing and employment in a lawful, healthy way. Finding housing is one of the most immediate challenges. Many states impose restrictions on ex-prisoners regarding housing assistance, and many landlords refuse applications of people with a criminal history. Some faith-based re-entry programs assist clients in finding homes, and some offer temporary housing as part of their services. In areas where housing is in short supply, faith-based providers often cannot find good housing, and ex-prisoners may become homeless or have to move in with family or friends who neither want them or can afford to support them.

While housing is the primary need of most ex-prisoners, ex-prisoners have a variety of other material needs. CORM assists ex-prisoners to address the material and emotional needs that will help them maintain a law-abiding life-style. The services provided within the scope of mentoring and case management include:

- referral services
- pen pals
- counseling
- transportation assistance (bus tokens, bus passes)
- Christian support groups
- mentoring
- employment search assistance
- life and job skills training
- assistance to find housing
- transitional shelter

Regular meetings are scheduled to help ex-prisoners reach the goals outlined in the plan. Weekly meetings are offered so ex-prisoners can talk about their struggles and accomplishments and build supportive relationships. Employment needs are assessed and clients are referred to appropriate employment leads.

Caring for oneself also involves learning to deal with unresolved emotional issues in a productive way. Ex-prisoners may have the best intentions to avoid returning to criminal behavior and prison, but without structure and accountability, they can easily fail. Good mentoring can reduce the likelihood of failure. Mentors bring a certain amount of structure, expectations and accountability to their relationship with an ex-prisoner. Mentors also fill the ex-prisoners' time with positive activities, assist with practical issues, serve as role models and encourage success. Good mentors accept ex-prisoners as they are and respond to their individual needs. This is a time-consuming effort that usually requires round-the-clock commitment. Several of the programs studied offer mentoring: the Abundant Life Network, Conquest Offender Reintegration Ministries, House of Hope of Alachua County, "Rational Emotive Spiritual Therapy" (R.E.S.T.) Program, and Re-Entry Prison and Jail Ministry.

### **Connecting with family: Meeting relational needs**

Many ex-prisoners have difficulty sustaining healthy relationships with loved ones. The support of ex-prisoner program staff and volunteers is often critical for reconnecting ex-prisoners with their families. The Christian service providers in this study agree that family reintegration and development in key relationships, such as with spouses and children, are necessary components of successful re-entry. They do not ascribe to a single approach to this issue, so the guidance a client receives in their attempt at family reconciliation depends on the particular method recommended by the service provider. For example, some providers encourage in-depth counseling and modeling of healthy relationships provided by staff and workers at faith-based organizations. Many ex-prisoners express the need to be loved and appreciated in a consistent and reliable manner, regardless of past actions and their present façade. Several of the Christian service providers we interviewed suggest that this kind of unconditional love is exactly what they attempt to provide.



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### Case Examples

In places where housing is more affordable, programs such as the **Abundant Life Network**, **House of Hope** of Alachua County, **Liberty Ministries**, **T.E.A.M. Mentoring**, and **Wholeway House** offer full residential care. The structured residential care programs provided by these Christian organizations offer the discipline, instruction, accountability, emotional support and counsel that are of critical importance in the first few months after release. These providers believe that the residents need clear structure and as little exposure to temptation as possible in the period immediately following their release. The residential programs achieve this through a variety of means, including curfews, tight schedules, limits on spending money, and bans on smoking, drinking, and drugs.

**Liberty House** uses a behavior modification point system to enforce strict rules, including participation in worship services and Bible studies, training sessions, chores, curfews, random drug tests, room searches, and limits on phone use and visits from outsiders. Residents receive negative points by taking part in behaviors such as drinking, smoking, having a critical attitude, lying to staff, and having an angry outburst. If a resident reaches the maximum number of points, his case is reviewed and he may be expelled from the program. On the other hand, when a resident reaches his monthly goal, he may be rewarded with privileges such as overnight or weekend visits with approved family members or friends.

The **“Rational Emotive Spiritual Therapy” (R.E.S.T.)** Program addresses ex-prisoners’ cycle of self-destructive behaviors and thought patterns, and engages clients in a process of healing and change. Dr. Rick McKinney established this program based on Albert Ellis’ Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (R.E.B.T.). Like Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy, Rational Emotive Spiritual Therapy is designed to help people identify and work through issues of fear, stress, anger, anxiety, depression, guilt, shame, pride, relationships, loneliness, addictions, and feelings of worthlessness. “As you think, so you are,” says Dr. McKinney, paraphrasing an Old Testament proverb. McKinney believes that once inmates are thinking more clearly and have self-understanding, issues like employment and drug rehabilitation are surmountable. The program encourages participants to rely on God’s spiritual power to help them change negative behavior. The Inmate Restoration and Aftercare Program continues the ministry to prisoners once they are released by pairing them with trained volunteers from local churches who serve as “Faith Counselors.” The Faith Counselors attend worship services with ex-prisoners and meet regularly with them to work on re-entry goals. In spite of its strong Christian basis, the program is neither exclusive nor ineffective with persons from different traditions. No “invitation” to faith is offered or worship service attendance required during inmate training, and ex-prisoners are paired with Faith Counselors who share their religious affiliation. R.E.S.T. Philly’s web site includes a “Prayer Altar” bulletin board, where families and friends of inmates communicate their prayer requests to program counselors.

Some interviewees commented that they have clients who are seeking a substitute family to compensate for negative experiences with their own families. Larry Gaalswyk of T.E.A.M. Mentoring in Molt, Montana considers positive relational support to be the primary need of the programs’ participants. Similarly, the Abundant Life Network in Austin, Texas, which serves female ex-prisoners, emphasizes connection with family, particularly children. The program allows weekend visits with family members and holds parenting classes during the week.

Even when ex-prisoners have a great desire to renew family connections, some faith-based service providers believe that connecting ex-prisoners with their families immediately after release may be very difficult, unwanted or unhealthy. Pastor Johnson of the House of Hope of Alachua County observed that his clients are in need of personal direction and, at times, contact with their families may be more of a hindrance than a support. At the House of Hope, no one is allowed to make contact with their families or other acquaintances for the first month. Longer-term residents are allowed to communicate with their family of origin. One ex-prisoner we spoke with has accepted the fact that his daughter was adopted and that he no longer has any claim to her, as he was never a “real” father to her. In his view, he cannot interrupt the life his daughter has built, just because he is now ready to be a father.

### Case Examples

Denise Nobs, co-director of **Wholeway House**, with her husband Louis, observed that the men at Wholeway House need nurturing. At Wholeway House, “God sets the lonely in families; He leads the prisoners out with rejoicing.”<sup>27</sup> No better evidence of reconnection and transformation was needed than the Wholeway community’s graduation celebration in November, 2001. Three graduates were honored, and their local church communities showed up in force. Residents joined local churches and participated in church ministries and fellowship. Three ex-prisoners talked about the major obstacles they had overcome and testified to God’s faithfulness to them in their journey. Louis Nobs talked about the special friendships that developed with each of the men. Denise Nobs recalled there were no dry eyes among the mentors and pastors who spoke about the graduates. It seems that Wholeway House not only transforms the “receivers,” but the “givers” into whole persons.

Wholeway volunteers meet with prisoners during their last year in prison and attempt to reconcile them with their families. Wholeway House provides guest quarters for family members, who may come as frequently as possible for supervised visits. Denise Nobs noted that all her clients over the past few years have reconnected with their families in some way, though that might not mean that an ex-prisoner resumes living with a spouse, for example.

**The Salvation Army** in Philadelphia has several programs intended to enhance family reintegration, including a weekend retreat for incarcerated mothers and their children and interactive parenting workshops for female ex-prisoners. **Spark of Hope** is a special service of Salvation Army provided for children of incarcerated parents. Its purpose is to build self-esteem and protect these youth from risk factors associated with delinquency, truancy, school dropout and future criminal activity.

### Connecting with the community: Meeting the needs of others

During our interviews, we were impressed by the way faith and religious beliefs transformed and changed the outlook of ex-prisoners. Ex-prisoners living new lives are the most credible ambassadors to say to others, “I have been there, and the costs outweigh the benefits.” Such ex-prisoners can serve as role models and guides to teenagers who are in the process of becoming criminals and are prison bound. As an ex-prisoner, Pastor Johnson of the House of Hope of Alachua County draws from personal experience

in providing re-entry services. His clients respond to him, as he has walked in their shoes and has proved that major change is possible. Some graduates of the House of Hope’s program who live in the Gainesville area make themselves available to help the program’s current clients. At Wholeway House, the directors encourage ex-prisoners to take part in ministry activities. About half of their clients stay involved in volunteer service, with some choosing to minister to inmates.

It is one thing to help an individual ex-prisoner re-enter the community. It is another to try to change the wider system and affect many more lives. The Christian community is known for its efforts at reforming the correctional system. From the early days when the Quakers reformed the prison system, to current efforts to reverse the death penalty, the faith-based community has spearheaded numerous attempts to change the system. Many of our interviewees felt their organizations are either too small or too new to engage in social change efforts. There are, however, two notable exceptions: LA Metro and House of Hope.



## BUILDING CONNECTIONS

### Case Examples

**Rev. Eugene Williams** and **Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LA Metro)** are the primary advocates responsible for lowering the cost of telephone calls to and from correctional facilities in California. In our interview with Rev. Williams, he said, “It is cheaper to call Europe from anywhere in California than to call from prison to home within the state for the same amount of time.” When LA Metro began investigating the situation, they were told by the state that security monitoring is expensive and without it, the prisoners can plot crimes and be in touch with outside gangs. However, through *The Freedom of Information Act*, LA Metro discovered that the State of California pays \$150,000 a year to monitor prison phone calls. In contrast, state revenues from phone calls to and from prison totaled \$13 million last year alone. After major political pressure, the governor agreed to lower the cost of phone calls to and from prison by 25 percent. LA Metro was pleased with this response, but is demanding a more substantive reduction. For now, the legislature in Sacramento has agreed to hold a hearing on the topic, and LA Metro hopes to open up inexpensive lines of communication between prisoners and their families without sacrificing security. Furthermore, they hope to force the state to earmark the surplus money from the telephone calls for re-entry programs.

In September 1988, as a result of pressure from churches and other groups, California Governor Pete Wilson signed into law Assembly Bill 743, also known as the “GED Initiative.” This legislation ensured that persons convicted of non-violent crimes could be ordered to receive GED training as part of their probation, in lieu of incarceration. This legislation was the culmination of a three-year advocacy effort. At start-up, success was defined as having 10 percent of initial clients achieving a full GED within three years. LA Metro and Rev. Williams successfully persuaded the four counties they operate in to adopt the initiative.

**Pastor Thomas Johnson** of the **House of Hope** of Alachua County is campaigning to restore voting rights for ex-prisoners in Florida. After talking with many people and writing letters to state officials in Florida, Pastor Johnson was contacted by the Brennan Center for Justice, which sued the state of Florida on his behalf. The case has received national attention. Given the strong disproportion of people of color in prisons, it is evident that denying ex-prisoners’ right to vote prevents many African -American and Hispanic ex-prisoners from being citizens with full rights. Pastor Johnson started a letter campaign and is now engaged in a legal battle to regain his and other ex-prisoners’ right to vote.

### Strengthening Connections: Issues for Further Study

The void resulting from limited parole supervision and public aftercare programs for ex-prisoners is one that a number of Christian organizations are taking the opportunity to fill. The Christian community offers a variety of responses to the challenge of released prisoners. Christian service providers operate out of religious commitment, and in some cases, out of compassion that stems from personal life experience. Their appeal is in their dedication and willingness to work intensively with those members of society whom many others shun.

For those ex-prisoners who seek change and rehabilitation, Christian service providers seem to provide structure, caring, hope and support that may not be available elsewhere. While this report outlines several promising practices and provides some answers to the question of how Christian organizations are facilitating the successful re-entry of ex-prisoners into their communities, it raises many more issues that can be fertile ground for continued knowledge development in the following areas:

1. Assessing the prevalence of congregation-based and other faith-based involvement in post-release prison programs;
2. Developing housing options for ex-prisoners;
3. Providing technical assistance for resource, program and staff development for services to ex-prisoners, their families and communities;
4. Developing outreach strategies to recruit appropriate program participants;
5. Coordinating the network of ex-prisoner services;
6. Measuring program outcomes and service effectiveness;
7. Identifying the needs of female ex-prisoners;
8. Examining the role of faith-based organizations in strengthening marriage and parent-child relationships;
9. Examining the role of faith-based organizations in serving communities with high rates of recidivism and concentrated number of ex-prisoners;
10. Tracking the political advocacy activities of ex-prisoners; and
11. Assessing the unique contribution of the Christian faith in prison and ex-prison services versus secular and other faiths.

# 2

PART TWO: FAITH-BASED CONNECTIONS



## FAITH-BASED CONNECTIONS

### 1. The Abundant Life Network

Savitri Kumar-Saldaña, Director  
P.O. Box 180084  
Austin, TX 78718  
(512) 481-9631  
[www.theabundantlifeforum.com](http://www.theabundantlifeforum.com)

#### Organizational Profile

**Mission:** To provide a free, safe shelter where ex-prisoners and other socially disadvantaged individuals can continue to heal their broken spirits and to cultivate life and employment skills that will enable them to transition successfully back into society.

**Religious background and affiliation:** The Abundant Life Network is a non-denominational, Christ-centered, community-based organization founded by Savitri Kumar-Saldaña.

**Motivation and experience of leadership:** Director Savitri Kumar-Saldaña incorporated the Abundant Life Network in August 2001. She developed her vision to work with ex-prisoners after working with another aftercare program for one and a half years. She has chosen to work with women because fewer programs exist that are oriented to women, and because of her ability to counsel women.

**Clientele:** The program is open to any women who is battered, impoverished or previously incarcerated, but primarily has served time for non-violent, drug or property-related offenses. The program receives clients through referrals from prison chaplains and walk-ins. To date, 10 women have entered the program, but only four are currently in the program. The average length of stay has been four to five months. Note: Since the time of our interview, the program has expanded to include clients with HIV/AIDS.

**Staffing:** There is one full-time volunteer in addition to the director. Forty-five volunteers serve two hours a week as mentors, or in other capacities. Volunteers from local congregations help conduct Bible studies, mentor and befriend clients, and assist clients in meal preparation.

Mentors receive training through another agency that conducts regional outreach for ex-prisoner programs. Similar to case managers, volunteers maintain notes in the client files, documenting changes and activities, such as meetings attended and employment.

**Operating budget:** The annual cost is estimated at \$10,000 per client at full capacity.

**Funding:** At the time of our interview, Kumar-Saldaña was supporting the project through personal resources and was seeking additional funding.

#### Services

**Housing:** Housing assistance is provided in three phases. The Transitional Housing and Aftercare Center component (Phase I) offers free room and board for six months. This phase includes training in religious principles and independent living skills such as job skills, budgeting, and personal grooming and management. Clients explore vocational interests, develop job skills, learn to “dress for success,” and begin strategizing about employment, housing and supportive relationships. In this phase, clients are tested for drug use and may participate in a 12-Step program at the center. The Progressive Independence component (Phase II) offers centralized housing for reduced rent and is open to clients who are employed. In return for the low-rent housing provided in this phase of the program, participants are expected to help take care of the house. The Independent Housing component (Phase III) offers assistance to participants in locating an independent living situation through a network of landlords. The program maintains some contact with participants through mentoring.

**Employment:** The Abundant Life Network is connected to a bank of 25 employers who hire ex-prisoners. Job placements include basic data entry and carpentry. Clients participating in the Transitional Housing and Aftercare Center are not expected to be working. Those participating in the Progressive Independence and Independent Housing components must be employed.

## FAITH-BASED CONNECTIONS

**Reconnection with family and community:** Weekend visitation from family members is possible, but the program stresses the importance of having the women “concentrate on themselves” first. A parenting class is part of the life skills curriculum in the program.

**Advocacy and legal support:** Involvement with legal issues occurs on an as-needed basis, such as a referral to help a woman regain custody of her children. On occasion, the director meets with a parole officer to support a client.

### The Role of Religion

Religious affiliation or identification is not a prerequisite to enroll in this program. However, women must participate in a morning devotional time and an evening worship and testimonial time. Evangelism occurs through relationships with volunteers and mentors. Approximately seven of the 10 participants have experienced a new or renewed religious commitment during their time in the program. This has occurred primarily through relationships with mentors.

### Responsibility of Client

Clients must abide by house rules and a strict schedule. While some women come resisting a structured program and lifestyle changes, Kumar-Saldaña believes structure is essential to facilitating real change.

## FAITH-BASED CONNECTIONS

### 2. Conquest Offender Reintegration Ministries (CORM)

Louis Jones, President  
P.O. Box 73873  
Washington, DC 20056  
(202) 723-2014  
[www.conquesthouse.org](http://www.conquesthouse.org)

#### Organizational Profile

**Mission:** To provide support services to ex-prisoners and at-risk youth, with the long-term goal of helping prevent crime and reduce recidivism.

**Religious background and affiliation:** CORM is an interdenominational organization established in 1995 by a group of people from Christian Conquest Ministries, a Mennonite Church in Washington, D.C. CORM is a 501(c)(3) designated nonprofit organization with a Board of Directors from Mennonite, Baptist, Pentecostal, Catholic, and African Methodist Episcopal denominations. However, the agency is not officially associated with any one denomination.

**Motivation and experience of leadership:** In 1995, three members of a Mennonite church, Louis Jones, Laverne Brewster and Bobby Barnes wanted to address the 75 percent recidivism rate for ex-prisoners in the District of Columbia. Bobby Barnes, the visionary founder for this project, had spent several years of his life in and out of prison. Due to a religious conversion in prison, he turned his life around and never went back to prison. Laverne Brewster has had several family members in prison, including her son and her husband, who have been released.

**Clientele:** CORM works with adult men and women prisoners who are within two years of release, and with those who have been out of prison for less than one year. CORM supports about 35 individuals monthly. About four new clients contact CORM each month, while approximately two clients are taken off the service because of lost contact, failure to adhere to program rules, or being transferred to another state. CORM gives priority to clients who will work, will accept post-release

mentoring, do not have any outstanding charges, and who plan to reside in the Washington, D.C. area.

**Staffing:** CORM has two paid staff members and an additional 12 volunteers to provide services. The service largely relies on volunteers, who are recruited from local churches, through the web site, and through other volunteer service web sites such as [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org).

**Operating budget:** The annual budget for the re-entry program is \$60,000.

**Funding:** Sources of income include individual donations, foundation grants, business grants, United Way campaign funds and in-kind donations.

#### Services

**The Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Project (REO),** in operation since 1997, helps prepare people who are serving short sentences for release by working with them during and immediately after release from prison.

**The House of Fun Center,** started in September 2000, provides over 25 neighborhood children and youth with after-school tutoring, mentoring, games and other activities. Many of these youth have parents who are incarcerated. This center serves as a field office for the District II Community Oriented Policing Service (COPS).

**Spiritual services:** Services encompass Christian outreach events, Bible studies, gospel concerts, seminars, and publications for inmates and the broader community. One of their most popular publications, *Equipping Your Church to Minister to Ex-prisoners*, contains information relevant to the Christian church and is designed to motivate congregations to serve in the criminal justice arena. CORM's Spiritual Services are optional; clients enrolled in the REO or the House of Fun Center programs do not have to participate in any religious activities to receive the services of those programs.

## FAITH-BASED CONNECTIONS

**Employment:** CORM works with Jubilee Jobs, an employment agency that maintains a list of employers who hire ex-prisoners. CORM refers clients to appropriate employment leads and maintains records of each client's employment.

**Mentoring and follow-up:** Through mentoring and ongoing case management, CORM may assist a client with any of the following: referral services, pen pals, counseling, transportation (bus tokens, bus passes). Christian support groups, employment search, life and job skills training, housing search and transitional shelter. If a mentor is available pre-release, the inmate will be matched with a mentor at this point. If no mentor is available, CORM's case manager will meet with the inmate to develop their re-entry plan. After clients complete the program, which usually lasts one year, staff and mentors continue to communicate with them through letters or phone calls.

**Reconnecting families and communities:** CORM is planning to start a support group for families of ex-prisoners. One of CORM's publications addresses family concerns. *Help! My Loved One Is in Prison* details ways families can help their loved ones through the prison experience.

**Advocacy and legal support:** CORM rarely gets involved in legal issues. They refer clients to legal services if the issue impedes an ex-prisoners' ability to properly re-integrate into society.

### The Role of Religion

CORM is a Christian program that provides services including teaching Biblical principles. All Christian clients are expected to fellowship with a local Bible-believing congregation of their choice.

### Responsibility of Client

Clients must sign an agreement stating that they understand CORM's operating principles. Clients also must take part in a correspondence course designed to assess the client and teach him or her about the re-entry

process. An entry plan is developed for each client, and clients meet regularly with mentors or case managers for assistance in reaching their re-entry goals. Ex-prisoners are asked to attend weekly support group meetings, one for men and one for women. At these meetings, they can discuss their struggles and accomplishments, and build supportive friendships. CORM may withdraw support if the ex-prisoner is not attending meetings regularly.

### Success Indicators

According to CORM's records, only two clients returned to prison during the time they were actively participating in programs.

### Affiliations

CORM volunteers receive training from Prison Fellowship Ministries. CORM also has an active partnership with Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), the federal government agency responsible for parole and probation in the District of Columbia. CORM staff interact frequently with parole officers, and work with CSOSA to link mentors with ex-prisoners.



## FAITH-BASED CONNECTIONS

### 3. House of Hope of Alachua County

Pastor Thomas Johnson, Executive Director  
P.O. Box 12113  
Gainesville, FL 32604  
(352) 376-3964  
[www.hohinfo.org](http://www.hohinfo.org)

#### Organizational Profile

**Mission:** To provide a temporary home where ex-prisoners can grow in their faith and overcome challenges to successful re-entry.

**Religious background and affiliation:** The House of Hope is strongly religious and intensely Christian, but is not affiliated with any one church or denomination.

**Motivation and experience of leadership:** Thomas Johnson, a former ex-prisoner, became a Christian about six years ago, after which he attended seminary and later worked in New York in the Bowery Mission. During this time period, members of a church in Alachua County, Florida became interested in aiding ex-prisoners. They realized that every year the Florida Department of Corrections and local jails were releasing more than 23,000 ex-prisoners to Florida streets. Most of these ex-prisoners (predominantly men) were ill prepared for successful daily life in the community. The group, along with other churches, formed a nonprofit organization. A representative from the board visited the Bowery Mission and recruited Mr. Johnson to lead the project. Pastor Johnson was ordained after moving to Florida and has served as an assistant pastor in a small church not too far from the House of Hope.

**Clientele:** Only men who have declared their faith in Jesus Christ are admitted to the program. During imprisonment, inmates can apply to the program. If the prison chaplain recommends them, they are interviewed. At any given time, there are five men living in the house. The shortest period of stay for residents is 90 days, and many stay as long as six months. Residents are welcome to stay as long as they wish, if their bed is not needed for the next person who is scheduled to come from prison.

**Staffing:** In collaboration with the local Sheriff, Pastor Johnson runs the House of Hope of Alachua County. He is the only paid staff member. The program uses volunteers to drive residents to work and appointments, help them plan their future, advise them and invite them to social events. Women volunteers' responsibilities are primarily limited to activities that don't require direct contact with the residents.

**Operating budget:** The annual budget is approximately \$60,000.

**Funding:** The program receives private funds from individuals and churches.

#### Services

**Housing:** Clients reside on the premises.

**Employment:** Almost all clients are given work within a week of their arrival. Most employers are in the construction business. Even ex-prisoners who have different vocational skills are advised to work in construction for three months until leaving the House of Hope, when they search for work in their field. For the transition period, it is essential that they be employed. It helps if a few residents are employed together, so they can help each other and provide mutual accountability.

**Reconnection with family and community:** After the first 30 days of residence, those who wish to pursue family reunification are assisted with this process. Often, family members are not interested in reuniting with the ex-prisoner. The ex-prisoner maintains a limited relationship with his family while starting a new life.

**Advocacy:** Pastor Johnson is engaged in a campaign to change Florida law regarding voting rights for ex-prisoners.

#### The Role of Religion

The House of Hope's program is designed to help establish ex-prisoners in their Christian faith. Clients are expected to attend at least one weekly Bible study and to join the church of their choice. In the House of Hope's



brochure, the opening lines are: *“Fight Crime. Save Souls.”* The program encourages clients to depend on God for help in overcoming addictions and other difficulties in their transition from their old lifestyles to new lives as productive citizens.

### **Responsibility of Client**

Clients must take part in certain activities each week, including Bible studies, financial planning and discussion groups. They also must abide by a curfew, with certain exceptions. Residents’ earnings are managed by the program; no resident is allowed to have more than \$20 in their possession at any time.

### **Success Indicators**

In the five years that the program has been operating, 150 men have participated in the program. According to Pastor Johnson, 85 percent have successfully re-integrated into the community. Two of these former residents either opened or are in the process of opening a similar program for re-entry in other parts of Florida. In addition, some graduates of the program who reside in the area make themselves available to current residents.

### **Affiliations**

The House of Hope uses the assistance of a network of Christian employers in the area.

## FAITH-BASED CONNECTIONS

### 4. Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LA Metro)

Rev. Eugene Williams III, President  
11100 Southwestern Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90047  
(323) 242-6770 / (323) 755-1114  
[www.lametro.org](http://www.lametro.org)

#### Organizational Profile

**Mission:** To train and develop the capacity of clergy, lay and community leaders to revitalize the communities where they are located.

**Religious background and affiliation:** LA Metro, also known as LAM, is comprised of a network of 110 congregations ranging in size from 75 to 300 members. Each congregation pays dues and participates in policy campaigns and service work. This ecumenical coalition includes some non-Christian organizations (mosques, synagogues, and secular neighborhood organizations). However, the religious tone of the program is Christian.

**Motivation and experience of leadership:** LA Metro's impetus for working with ex-prisoners came after recognizing that African-American and Hispanic congregations are missing a vital part of their communities. That is, young African-American and Hispanic males (18- to 40-years of age) are rarely seen in church. This phenomenon has been linked to the fact that a large segment of this population is in and out of the prison system and seldom at home, at work or in pro-social institutions of the community. Furthermore, Rev. Williams noted that sentences are usually harsher for African-American and Hispanic defendants. These facts prompted a clarion call for the African-American community and especially for the faith-based community to reclaim these men.

**Clientele:** The program targets men, but also accepts women who were convicted for non-violent crimes. Thirty percent of their clients are women. In 2001, the first group of 50 non-violent offenders entered the program instead of going to jail. They underwent GED training

twice a week in three-hour sessions. In March of 2002, 50 additional people were to start the same program. Day and evening classes are offered to accommodate work schedules. It is expected that in 2003, 600 people will take the GED courses, 150 in each of the four counties served.

**Staffing:** The staff includes the executive director, Rev. Williams, and eight part-time workers. In addition, 5,700 volunteers help in the policy campaigns, usually in letter writing and phone calls, and occasionally in rallies. Volunteers from the congregations serve as mentors for ex-prisoners in the program. Approximately 100 mentors are located in Los Angeles, and 40 mentors are in San Diego. Mentors help ex-prisoners with special needs, serve as positive role models, connect them with resources and encourage them to continue with the program. The mentors often help with transportation, and if they cannot, other volunteers are available for transportation.

**Operating budget:** The cost of the program's educational component, in addition to that for probation officers, is \$160,000 annually. In Los Angeles, the annual cost including policy costs, is \$251,000.

**Funding:** The program receives funds from the courts, the member congregations and individual donations.

#### Services

**Educational services:** LA Metro developed a GED program initially designed for African-American male felons who could opt for GED training as an alternative to serving time in prison. The congregations provide the educational services and communal environment, as well as facilities. The county's adult education system provides teachers. Under the direction of LA Metro, clients are selected, supervised, and matched with both a contact in the criminal justice system and a church member who serves as a mentor. The program gives convicted felons the opportunity for an educational

## FAITH-BASED CONNECTIONS

experience that will improve their employment options and enhance successful transition into the community. Currently, the program operates in four separate Southern California counties: Los Angeles, San Bernardino, San Diego and the Inland Empire. People with substance abuse problems are referred to appropriate services and Alcoholics Anonymous groups. Congregations where GED is taught also provide after-school and tutorial services for children of prisoners. The program and the correctional system keep records on program participation, successful graduation, recidivism and other key changes in the life of participants. However, once someone leaves the program, no follow-up is made unless the client initiates it.

**Advocacy:** As a result of pressure from churches and other groups, California Governor Pete Wilson signed into law Assembly Bill 743, also known as the “GED Initiative.” This 1988 legislation ensures that persons convicted of non-violent crimes can be ordered to receive GED training as part of their probation. In addition to the GED initiative, LA Metro is now engaged in a policy campaign to lower the cost of telephone calls and hence make telephone communication between prisoners and their families more accessible.

### The Role of Religion

According to Rev. Williams, religion is not a factor in selecting who is served, but is about who serves and how. He believes that he was charged with “keeping his brother” and this charge requires both direct service provision and policy changes. Although a major emphasis of the program is connecting clients with local congregations, any client who does not wish to work with a congregation is referred to a secular educational program. A client can initiate prayer with his or her mentor, but this is not an expectation. All clients are invited to join a local congregation they are assigned to, and many do. Clients are invited on a religious journey, but it is their decision to accept or reject it, as long as they are willing to give it a try.

### Responsibility of Client

The program serves as an alternative to prison. It is a “prison aversion” program that mandates certain activities. Participants are to attend group counseling sessions offered by another contracted nonprofit organization. Small groups (up to 10) of ex-prisoners meet and discuss issues in a faith-based environment. They discuss spirituality, life goals, substance abuse, challenges regarding gangs and God’s expectations.

### Affiliations

LA Metro is an umbrella organization for three other organizations: the Regional Congregations and Neighborhood Organizations Training Center, the San Diego United African-American Ministries of Action Council and Congregations Organized for Prophetic Tradition in Action.

## FAITH-BASED CONNECTIONS

### 5. Liberty Ministries

Mark Goins, Director  
P.O. Box 87  
Schwenksville, PA 19473  
(610) 287-5481  
[www.libertymin.org](http://www.libertymin.org)

#### Organizational Profile

**Mission:** “...To serve offenders in prison and on the street by sharing with them God’s love, providing practical assistance and encouraging Biblical standards of justice.”

**Religious background and affiliation:** Liberty Ministries is a non-denominational organization, founded by several Mennonites in 1980.

**Clientele:** The program accepts male prisoners. Prisoners who are interested in the program send a letter of inquiry, and they receive in reply a letter outlining the program and its requirements. Those who wish to enroll in the program complete an application, are interviewed and provide a letter of recommendation from the prison chaplain. Liberty House doesn’t accept persons with violent offenses or sex offenses, or persons with communicable diseases. The program director confers with parole officers, the Chief of Police in Schwenksville, staff and volunteers to review each applicant. Any neighbor with concerns about a resident can consult the Chief of Police, who has helped select each resident at the House, and can vouch for their character. Currently, about 27 men each year enter Liberty House. Most complete the initial six months. About 50 men have completed the program during the current director’s tenure.

**Staffing:** Liberty Ministries has approximately 100 volunteers. Liberty House has seven full- and part-time staff, as well as eight to 10 “in-house” volunteers at any given time, who help teach evening classes and mentor residents.

**Operating budget:** Liberty Ministries has an operating budget of approximately \$200,000 annually. This doesn’t

include the numerous hours of donated labor that went into renovating the Liberty House building.

**Funding:** Approximately 80 percent of the budget comes from donations, including 20 percent from congregations and the money contributed by the residents (\$85 per week). The remaining 20 percent comes from the income of its two stores, the Liberty Thrift store and Liberty Home Furnishings and House Wares. A small percent of the budget comes from two fundraisers — the Annual Banquet and a year-end mail appeal.

#### Services

**Housing:** Liberty House clients reside on the premises. This residential aftercare program calls itself a “Christian home” for ex-prisoners who are serious about starting a new life in Christ. Liberty Ministries relocated from Philadelphia to Schwenksville in the mid-1980s. Prior to securing a facility for a residential program, each aftercare client resided with a volunteer in an apartment in Schwenksville. The ministry eventually purchased the Schwenksville Motel on Main Street, and had it renovated to include five two-bedroom apartments for residents and staff, and communal living quarters for an additional 12 occupants. This is Phase I of the residential aftercare program. The program provides a highly structured environment, as well as evening classes in budgeting, financial management, anger and stress management, relationship skills, personal counseling, car maintenance, and Bible study. In 2001, the ministry implemented Phase II of Liberty House, in which Phase I graduates live in two-bedroom apartments owned by the organization. In Phase II, participants continue to have some support through social activities and counseling on an individual basis. The ministry expects to be able to accommodate a total of 20 men in both phases of the program, as soon as additional apartments are ready for occupancy.

**Pre-release services:** The Christian Pre-Release Program (CPR) started at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF) in February 2001. CPR is a

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collaborative effort of Prison Fellowship Ministries and Yokefellow Ministries. CPR describes a radical agreement with MCCF, where Christian inmates are assigned to a separate cellblock. Trained volunteer instructors and mentors come to the cellblock each week to provide five nights of Bible study, life skills training, counseling and other services. As of spring 2001, 39 inmates had completed this program at MCCF.

**Employment:** A Liberty House resident is expected to find work within the first two weeks of the program. The program has established relationships with a few local employees, and residents also use employment agencies and newspapers to find work. Once clients are working, they each contribute \$85 each week towards room and board. Residents are allowed to keep up to \$75 each week for personal use, with the rest of his earnings put into an escrow account in his name. Most residents can save \$4,000-\$6,000 during the six-month Phase I. These savings are to be used towards rent or a car when a resident moves out.

Other programs of Liberty Ministries include annual distribution of Christmas stockings to MCCF inmates and the Lydia Project, an on-going ministry for female inmates.

### The Role of Religion

While the program accepts applicants without consideration of their religious orientation and affiliation, every resident still must attend church, other worship and Bible studies, and abide by all house rules. Residents are encouraged to get involved in their churches, whether they are helping to empty the trash or greeting church visitors. Church attendance enables residents to form a new support system that will be with them beyond the six-month program at Liberty House. Each client is paired with a mentor, ideally from the church that he attends. Director Mark Goins remarked that in the past two years, at least one person left the program because there was “too much God up in here.” On the other hand, he believes that about 95 percent of the residents experience renewed religious commitment during their participation in the program.

### Responsibility of Client

Liberty House is run according to strict rules that are enforced by a behavior modification point system. Residents get negative points by taking part in behaviors like drinking, smoking and having a critical attitude. Points and privileges are accrued for positive behaviors. Clients are given a journal where they record scripture and reflections from their devotional time, as well as goals and other personal information.

**Reconnection with family and community:** During the first six months, not much contact with family or other friends is encouraged. There have been occasions when a family’s close proximity interfered with a resident’s success; therefore, a potential applicant may be rejected if it appears he is too immersed with his family or if the family lives too close geographically. The staff does not initiate contact with families, but residents may receive limited phone calls.

### Success Indicators

The ministry staff, volunteers, mentors and current residents keep in touch with program graduates. The combination of structure and accountability within a communal setting offered at Liberty House seems to be effective. At least 70 percent of program participants have succeeded in remaining out of jail for three years.

### Affiliations

Liberty Ministries’ primary affiliations are Prison Fellowship and Yokefellow Ministries.

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### 6. Re-Entry Prison and Jail Ministry

Rev. Arthur (Art) Lyons, Chaplain  
P.O. Box 620  
Chula Vista, CA 91912  
(619) 426-4557  
[www.reentry.org](http://www.reentry.org)

#### Organizational Profile

**Mission:** To assist ex-prisoners in re-entry and to support fellow service providers in their work.

**Religious background and affiliation:** The program, formerly part of the Calvary movement, is now independent.

**Motivation and experience of leadership:** Rev. Arthur Lyons graduated from the Horizon School of Evangelism and served for some 20 years as a prison chaplain. Rev. Lyons now works as an assistant pastor in a local church and spends most of his time assisting ex-prisoners to re-enter their communities. He brings passion to this work that is fueled by his own experience of substance abuse and crime. He is committed to helping others break the cycle of crime and incarceration.

**Clientele:** All clients contact Rev. Lyons. Most applicants are Christians.

**Staffing:** The staff includes Rev. Lyons and five volunteers.

**Operating budget:** The budget for this program is \$1,400 monthly. Office space costs \$250 and the bookkeeper is paid \$300 per month with the balance for programs. Rev. Lyons receives no compensation except for his telephone bill.

**Funding:** The ministry is supported unofficially by the church where Rev. Lyons works through cash donations and volunteer service of committed Christians. Donation amounts typically range from \$10 to \$250, and cars are donated sporadically.

#### Services

**Clearinghouse:** This service consists of the following components: producing the annual directory, managing the program's web site, and serving as a reservoir of information for ex-prisoners, families, and service providers. The program also offers two kinds of training, bi-annual security training and recovery ministry training.

**Mentoring:** Mentoring is offered to provide support for making the right decisions in life and discerning what is right and what is wrong. The focus is on the individual and his or her relationship with Christ. Through mentoring, issues regarding family relationships, drug use, employment and social skills are raised. Mentoring can last a few weeks to a few years.

**Reconnection with family and community:** The program runs a family coping class for women with incarcerated husbands, pre-release workshops, and provides personal mentoring for 15 ex-prisoners. The program provides direct educational services and referrals.

**Advocacy and legal support:** A parishioner helps arrange legal advice for ex-prisoners. Often, the help needed is to formalize divorces for men who abandoned their families long ago.

#### The Role of Religion

Rev. Lyons has observed re-entry to be a difficult process that only those who turn from their old way of life to a new life in Jesus Christ have a chance for lasting change. To support this new life, he often prays with individuals, organizes group prayers and invites ex-prisoners to his church.

#### Affiliations

The program is home to the umbrella organization, "All Care Prison Network" (ACPN). This is a loose coalition of faith-based organizations that care for ex-prisoners on their way to reintegration into the community. The group meets periodically to share information and coordinate work.

### 7. R.E.S.T. Philly

Dr. Rick McKinney, Executive Director  
 House of Corrections  
 Administration Building, Room #3  
 8001 State Road  
 Philadelphia Prison System  
 Philadelphia, PA 19136  
 (215) 685-8149  
[www.restphilly.com](http://www.restphilly.com)

T.R.E.T.MENT, Inc.  
 (Training, Research, Education, and Therapy)  
 P.O. Box 12805  
 Wilmington, DE 19850  
 (302) 738-2050  
[www.restcounseling.com](http://www.restcounseling.com)

#### Organizational Profile

**Mission:** To help inmates, ex-prisoners and others overcome self-destructive behavioral patterns, and to equip the faith-based community to minister to troubled people.

**Religious background and affiliation:** While non-denominational and even “non-religious” in nature, the program is based on Christian principles and belief in a higher power. Dr. Rick McKinney calls the program spiritual rather than religious. Faith Partners and counselors have come from approximately 60 congregations — churches, mosques and temples — local to Philadelphia.

**Motivation and experience of leadership:** Dr. McKinney, who is trained in counseling and psychology, has developed his Rational Emotive Spiritual Therapy (R.E.S.T.) curriculum based on Albert Ellis’ Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (R.E.B.T.) to help people identify and work through issues of fear, stress, anger, anxiety, depression, guilt, shame, pride, relationships, loneliness, addictions and feelings of worthlessness. McKinney envisions his curriculum as leading people to God’s spiritual power, which in turn, helps transform their thinking and behavioral patterns. McKinney developed

and implemented parts of this program in Las Vegas, Nevada. In 1999, he relocated to Philadelphia and started developing his program in the prisons. The Inmate Restoration Aftercare Program (IRAP) is the aftercare component of this program.

**Clientele:** The program serves male and female prisoners and ex-prisoners in the Philadelphia area.

**Staffing:** There are five part-time staff and over 400 volunteers. Fifty Faith Partners, volunteers from local congregations, have completed training and wait to be matched with inmates. Counselors commit to a total of three years of training, including at least one year of eight-hour training sessions on Saturdays, and then interning in the prison setting with experienced counselors.

**Operating budget:** The cost of the program was undisclosed.

**Funding:** Funding comes from personal resources, congregational support and the City of Philadelphia, which provided initial start-up funds. The prison donates two offices and helps with the cost of printing, phone calls. This program is in need of financial support, and Dr. McKinney bears the major burden of the cost.

#### Services

**The Inmate Restoration Aftercare Program (IRAP)** is based on 12-week sessions addressing the issues mentioned previously. These sessions are 90 minute, weekly small group meetings. At the time of this interview, some 30 groups were meeting, ranging in size from seven to 10 prisoners. The groups are led by trained counselors called Faith Partners. After prisoners finish the 12-week phase, each participant is paired with a Faith Partner by age, gender, race and religious affiliation. The aim of IRAP is to create a contract between an ex-prisoner and a congregation of his or her choice. The contract may include required attendance at worship and regular meetings with the Faith Partner, as well as goals to stay off drugs and out of jail. The



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program refers prisoners and ex-prisoners to residential placements, drug rehabilitation, GED, education, or computer training centers as needed.

**Reconnection with family and community:** Faith Partners and counselors are trained to involve family and children. As prisoners get closer to release dates, depending on the relationship between the prisoner and their family, R.E.S.T. counselors or partners may help to contact the family and identify areas of support from the family. During this phase, inmates are also asked what other people in their life they might want to reach out to or help with the aid of their partner and congregation. Such programs are also offered during incarceration.

**Advocacy and legal support:** Support regarding legal issues and contacting parole officers, staff or counselors may be requested before going to trial. But most involvement is limited to writing letters or sending documentation of prisoners' participation and progress in the program. The program does not have a structured advocacy component, but does educate congregations and volunteers through training and speaking engagements.

### The Role of Religion

Religious elements, such as prayer for and with individuals, occur, but are not required or structured into the program. The program has a web site with a bulletin board called the "Prayer Altar," where families and friends of prisoners can make prayer requests. The requests are sent to staff and counselors and partners who pray for the individual's requests. During the prisoner's training, no "invitation" to faith is offered. Prisoners are not required to attend worship; however, McKinney noted that 100 percent of the participants reported experiencing a new or renewed religious commitment during their involvement in the program. This religious "conversion" is evidenced by a noticeable change of attitude.

### Responsibility of Client

There are no religious expectations for prisoners in the program. Once the ex-prisoner is matched with a partner and has chosen to partner with a congregation, there will be some agreement with the congregation about attendance at worship and other activities.

### Success Indicators

At the time of this interview, no prisoner had left the 12-week training voluntarily, although a few had been transferred or released before they completed the training. Of the 191 prisoners who graduated from the R.E.S.T. program in June 2001 and have been released from prison, only 53 of them (29 percent) have been re-incarcerated. The IRAP program recently completed a pilot run, with enhanced training, support and case management components.

## 8. Salvation Army: Aftercare Transitional Services

National Headquarters  
615 Slaters Lane  
P.O. Box 269  
Alexandria, VA 22313

Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware Division  
Naomi Carroll, Supervisor,  
Correctional Services Department  
701 North Broad Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19123  
(215) 787-2824  
[www.shinenow.com](http://www.shinenow.com)

### Organizational Profile

**Mission:** “The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.” The correctional services are a bridge of hope and self-esteem for prisoners and their families. The focus of the Aftercare Transitional Services Program is to prevent recidivism, offer individual and group support to ex-prisoners in the center, facilitate successful transition after their release, and to strengthen the mother-child relationship to prevent child abuse and stabilize the family.

**Religious background and affiliation:** The Salvation Army is an evangelical international movement that is not affiliated with any particular denomination. The Salvation Army describes itself as, “an evangelical organization dedicated to bringing people into a meaningful relationship with God through Christ.” As a national organization, the Salvation Army has several factors that distinguish it from the smaller, more recently established faith-based organizations examined in this report.

**Motivation and experience of leadership (historical):** A British Minister, William Booth began his ministerial career in 1852. Booth pursued his calling not through a

conventional church with a pulpit, but holding evangelistic meetings on the streets of London, which brought disfavor from the church and led Booth to embark upon a traveling ministry throughout England. He later joined with the Quakers and began “The Christian Mission.” The name was later changed to The Salvation Army. The Army came to the United States through Lieutenant Eliza Shirley, who had emigrated from England to search for work. In 1879, she held the first meeting of the Salvation Army in America, in Philadelphia.

**Clientele:** The Philadelphia program serves female ex-prisoners living at a local community corrections center.

**Staffing:** The Salvation Army has a well-established governance structure that includes more than 60,000 advisory board members.<sup>28</sup> The Philadelphia aftercare program staff includes a Project Manager and two clinicians who serve as support group facilitators.

**Operating budget:** The national organization has an operating budget of \$2.3 million, a 3.3 million-person volunteer force, and approximately 40,000 employees. The annual budget for the Philadelphia program is approximately \$16,430, which covers the cost of 46 clinical support group sessions, screening, administration, supervision and monthly staff consultation.

### Services

**Aftercare Transitional Services:** This core program began in 1994 and is housed at Community Correction Center #3. The program helps women residents make a successful transition to the community and their families. Each week, women attend a clinical support group for 90-minute sessions. The sessions deal with parenting, education, child abuse prevention, self-esteem, stress management, substance abuse recovery, and a variety of job and skills-related issues. The support group is the only component of the program in operation at present. A second component, professional case management, has been an active part of the program in the past.

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A third component, pairing newly released women with trained ex-prisoners who have succeeded in the community long-term, has not yet been implemented. Project leaders meet monthly to monitor and assess the success of the program and its participants.

**Reconnection with family and community:** The following programs focus on strengthening family connections and supporting families of people incarcerated.

**“Project Impact/SCI Muncy”** is a partner program between the Salvation Army and Muncy (Pennsylvania state prison for women). The Salvation Army currently provides monthly bus transportation for 24 children, family members and loved ones to visit SCI Muncy inmates.

**The Parental Access Visitation & Education (PAVE)** program sponsors activities for children and their incarcerated parents. Caretakers and non-custodial parents are included in this process. One component of this program, “Spark of Hope,” provides supportive services for children to help them build self-esteem and avoid delinquency, truancy, school dropout and future criminal activity.

**Relatives of Offenders Offering the Solutions (ROOTS)** is a monthly support group for people who have a loved one in prison.

**Mother and Child Retreat:** For over 20 years, the Salvation Army has been hosting an annual weekend retreat for incarcerated mothers and their children at Camp Ladore in Waymart, Pennsylvania (in the Pocono Mountains).

**Olympics of Hope:** Since 1992, the Army’s Correctional Advisory Council has held this event each year in the spring at the Temple Community Corps Center in North Philadelphia. This is primarily a recreational and educational event for children and families with incarcerated parents.

**Hotline:** A telephone hotline exists to provide counsel,

intervention, support services and information to families of people who are incarcerated. This is supervised through a partnership between the Salvation Army and the Prisoners’ Family Welfare Association, a group whose members include attorneys and Pennsylvania Courts of Common Pleas president judges.

**Note:** There are 11 Salvation Army community corrections facilities that provide four to six months of residential programming to address emotional, vocational and training issues, as well as community service. These facilities were initiated in response to federal RFP’s for community corrections facilities, but are state and regionally-funded. They are located in Chicago, Texas, Florida, North and South Carolina. These facilities work with ex-prisoners released from federal and other prisons. The Salvation Army’s 150 drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers in the U.S. also accept ex-prisoners, and in some cases, receive referrals from federal, state and local corrections.

### The Role of Religion

Although the Salvation Army is a church, and women participating in the Aftercare Transitional Services Program are welcome to take part in the church services, there is no religious requirement imposed on clients of this or any other Correctional Services Department program.

### Responsibility of Client

To remain in the program, all participants in Aftercare Transitional Services are required to attend sessions and to actively participate.

### Affiliation

The Salvation Army partners with the Correctional Services Department in Philadelphia to sponsor several pre-release programs that focus on strengthening family relationships and facilitating the prisoner’s re-entry into the family.

## 9. T.E.A.M. Mentoring

Larry Gaalswyk, Director  
 2155 Stephen Lane  
 Molt, MT 59057  
 (406) 656-8326

### Organizational Profile

**Mission:** To T.E.A.M. (Teach, Encourage, Assist and Model) with the Church and society's wounded to form healing, Christ-centered mentoring relationships.

**Religious background and affiliation:** Interdenominational Christian, both Catholic and Protestant.

**Motivation and experience of leadership:** T.E.A.M. (Teach, Encourage, Assist and Model) Mentoring, Inc. grew out of Prison Fellowship Ministries. It was founded in February 2000 to empower a small group of churches in Billings, Montana to rent a home offered to them for use for transitional living. Mr. Larry Gaalswyk was asked to be involved because the pastors involved knew his concerns about men getting out of prison. Gaalswyk's motivation is his "concern for the tremendous gap faced by so many of our society's forgotten to ever acclimate themselves into a healthy lifestyle." Gaalswyk first became involved in ministry to ex-prisoners as a volunteer at Montana State Men's Prison at Deer Lodge, Montana. Later, he was hired by Prison Fellowship Ministries. In that role, he was responsible for the training and supervision of Prison Fellowship volunteers going into the jails and prisons in Montana, Wyoming, and western South Dakota.

**Clientele:** The ministry serves both men and women being released from incarceration.

**Staffing:** Gaalswyk, who serves as State Director and Vice President, is the only paid staff. There are also a number of very active volunteers including Gaalswyk's wife and two men who contribute approximately half-time.

**Operating budget:** The annual budget was undisclosed.

**Funding:** T.E.A.M. Mentoring receives its financial support primarily from charitable donations of individuals and churches that are involved with the program. The organization recently received a grant as part of the Compassion Capital Fund of President Bush's faith-based initiative. The organization will hire additional staff upon receipt of those funds.

### Services

**Mentoring:** T.E.A.M. Mentoring's primary focus of service is positive relational support. The program has other components, but its focus is to help participants establish a healthy lifestyle. It accomplishes this by recruiting, training and supervising mentors, and integrating positive mentoring relationships into the lives of the participants.

**Housing:** The program currently operates a home for men in Billings, Montana and has plans for a women's home this fiscal year. There are also other Montana communities wanting to open transitional housing as soon as the organization is financially able to do so, and has the churches prepared to supply the needed relationships.

**Employment:** The program assists clients to acquire employment, with the mentors providing encouragement and accountability to find and maintain employment.

**Education:** The program connects clients with typical educational opportunities, and supplies the relational encouragement and accountability to maintain progress towards educational goals.

**Reconnection with family and community:** Reconciliation, as determined possible and healthy, is a part of goal setting. Often times, it is best done after observing more healthy relationships while interacting with staff, volunteers and other clients.

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### **The Role of Religion**

T.E.A.M. Mentoring requires that certified volunteers and churches involved with the program sign a statement acknowledging that it is a faith-based, Judeo-Christian organization. However, everyone is accepted into the program both as participants and as volunteer trainees. The organization recognizes there are clear distinctions, not so much in denominations of the Christian faith, but between the Christian faith and other religions. In respecting those differences, it encourages participants to take what they can from the training and apply it as they wish. The program places a high emphasis on a transformed life and the need for spiritual health to acquire true change.

### **Responsibility of Client**

The program requires participants to enter into a signed “mentoring agreement” in which they include their goals for life change, their own personal steps to success and their agreement to be asked pointed questions weekly by their mentoring team. The program also asks participants and mentors on the team to spend free time together.

### **Success Indicators**

The organization is relatively new and is currently determining benchmarks and outcome measures. Its last assessment indicated that of all participants who had fully engaged in the program, only 16 percent had returned to prison.

### **Affiliations**

T.E.A.M. Mentoring is associated with the Montana Faith-Health Cooperative, a network of faith-based and health care organizations.

## 10. Wholeway House

Louis and Denise Nobs, Co-Directors  
 P.O. Box 906  
 Willis, TX 77378  
 (936) 856-9683  
[www.wholeway.org](http://www.wholeway.org)

### Organizational Profile

**Mission:** To help ex-prisoners build healthy relationships, find gainful employment and participate in ministry to others.

**Religious background and affiliation:** Wholeway House is an independent residential Christian program that works with local congregations to provide a worship base and mentoring for ex-prisoners.

**Motivation and experience of leadership:** The program started over five years ago with Denise and Louis Nobs' realization that prisoners needed a place to stay that could nurture them when they were released. Mr. Nobs had been active in prison visitation. He became increasingly aware that ex-prisoners would have specific needs that should be met if they were to re-enter society successfully, find employment and start healthy relationships.

**Clientele:** Wholeway House serves male prisoners and ex-prisoners in Montgomery County, Texas. It is a six- to nine-month program. The program doesn't accept repeat-violent offenders or sex-offenders; they feel this is beyond the scope of their program and experience. Usually, volunteer mentors begin meeting with men during incarceration, when they assess the prisoners' conversion to Christianity and their commitment to a life change. Volunteers also assess prisoners' criminal, medical, family and employment history, educational levels, skills, personality and spiritual history. An application board helps screen potential residents. Once accepted, an inmate is matched with a mentor and a local congregation. The program serves 12 to 15 men each year, and has served approximately 40 clients over the last three years.

**Staffing:** In addition to the co-directors, there are about 18 volunteers who serve as mentors. The volunteers visit prisons and Wholeway House on a weekly basis. Mentors are trained quarterly. New mentors receive a full day of training, including segments run by Prison Fellowship, one segment by an experienced mentor, and an explanation of parole directives by representatives from the parole office.

**Operating budget:** The annual budget is approximately \$70,000. The minimum cost to support one resident is estimated at \$650 per month.

**Funding:** Men who are working contribute a residency fee of \$90 per week, which accounts for about 20 percent of the budget. Donations from individuals and businesses comprise 55 percent of the program's income, grant money contributes about five percent, and the remaining 20 percent comes from support from congregations.

### Services

**Housing:** Wholeway House clients reside on the premises. The 24-acre property contains seven houses. The living arrangement is considered a key factor in nurturing the ex-prisoners and enabling them to learn to develop healthy relationships.

**Employment:** After an adjustment period of about three weeks, during which the ex-prisoner is occupied with daily chores, the staff assists the client in finding employment. Wholeway House collaborates with "Project Rio," a federal program inmates sign up for during incarceration. Project Rio assesses interview and job skills, and after release, provides office space where ex-prisoners can go to orientation, perform job searches, work on resumes, and have access to phone and fax machines. Wholeway House also refers some residents to a day-labor site, and some residents use the services of temporary employment agencies. About 30 percent of the program's effort is focused on employment issues.

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**Reconnection with family and community:** About half of the program's efforts are focused on family reintegration. On average, they see families twice a month. The program may contact an inmate's family and arrange a supervised visit at Wholeway House once the inmate is released. Subsequent visits may be arranged, and a separate guest cottage is available for extended visits. The staff provides counseling to the family and the ex-prisoner as needed after each visit. Also, ex-prisoners work extensively with mentors from local churches regarding family and other relationships. Almost every man in the program has been able to reintegrate with his family in some ongoing way, even if that doesn't mean returning to a common living situation.

### The Role of Religion

Applying religious principles is critical to the program. While in prison, men are referred by prison chaplains, other ministries, or Wholeway volunteers, as men who are open to living in a structured environment and submitting themselves to the disciplines required. As men build relationships with the directors and other staff and volunteers, times of individual and group prayer are encouraged. Wholeway House encourages men to become involved in ministry, whether this is through their congregation or with another organization. About half of the clients get involved with some type of long-term volunteer ministry.

### Responsibility of Client

To be considered for this program, men must attend Bible study and worship services while in prison. During their stay at Wholeway House, men are required to worship at a local congregation. Ex-prisoners are expected to participate in morning devotions and in a weekly "application/life skills" class. During the first month, clients must complete daily work lists. Once a client has begun work, he is expected to maintain good work habits. Wholeway House maintains some records of recidivism and employment. Follow-up is primarily the choice of the ex-prisoner, but everyone who comes

through the program is on the mailing list, and mentors continue to work with him.

### Success Indicators

Of the approximately 40 clients served over the past three years, only two have been re-incarcerated. Those two individuals did not finish the average six- to nine-months in the program.

### Affiliations

Wholeway House currently partners with 15 congregations, 10 of which also support the program financially. The program also works with temporary employment agencies, the Project Rio program and a community college. The college offers educational programs for non-custodial parents and provides some job skills training. In addition, Wholeway House is part of a network for restorative justice issues that organizes conferences and workshops.



## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>15</sup> Some states are building larger correctional facilities in order to accommodate prisoners from other states, procuring revenue while alleviating overcrowding in other states' facilities.
- <sup>16</sup> Mumola, C. J.
- <sup>17</sup> Only about one third of prisoners were visited by other relatives or friends. References for visitation statistics include Petersilia, J. 2001. "When Prisoners Return to the Community: Political, Economic, and Social Consequences," *Corrections Management Quarterly*, 5, (3), 62-71; Clear, T. R., D. R. Rose, and J. A. Ryder. "Incarceration and the Community: The Problem of Removing and Returning Offenders." *Crime and Delinquency*, 47, 335-351; and Mumola, C.J.
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- <sup>19</sup> Dallao, M. 1997. "Coping with Incarceration from the Other Side of the Bars." *Corrections Today*, 59, 96-98.
- <sup>20</sup> Travis, J., A. L. Solomon, and M. Waul.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid. For more information see S. Gottfredson and R. Taylor. 1988. "Community Contexts and Criminal Offenders." In Hope, T., and M. Shaw, eds. *Communities and Crime Reduction*. London: Home Office.
- <sup>22</sup> Piehl, A. M.
- <sup>23</sup> Cnaan, R.
- <sup>24</sup> Schlosser, E.
- <sup>25</sup> Matthew 25:36, *New American Standard Bible*.
- <sup>26</sup> The Abundant Life Network has expanded its services to include women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.
- <sup>27</sup> Psalm 68:6, *The Bible, New International Version*.
- <sup>28</sup> The Salvation Army USA National Headquarters. *Annual Report*, 2001.





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