



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

Inmate Reentry Programs: Enhanced Information Sharing Could Further Strengthen Coordination and Grant Management

Government Accountability Office | [Full Report](#)

Quick Takeaways

- More than two-thirds of state prisoners are rearrested for a new offense within 3 years of release, and about half are re-incarcerated.
- The majority of inmates need assistance with things such as job skills, vocational training, education, substance abuse treatment, and parenting skills.
- Between 40 and 54 percent of former inmates were not able to obtain employment within 7 to 10 months of release.
- Federal Interagency Reentry Council publishes research and reports to help programs enact promising practices into their reentry programs, including veterans-focused materials.

Reentry Programs

About 700,000 inmates are released from federal and state custody each year, and another 9 million are booked into and released from local jails. According to the Federal Interagency Reentry Council (The Council), about 66 percent of inmates have substance abuse or dependence issues, and 24 percent have mental illness issues. In addition, former inmates are subject to a wide variety of legal and regulatory sanctions and restrictions, which are referred to as collateral consequences.

The Council's mission is to make communities safer; assist those returning from prison and jail in becoming productive, taxpaying citizens; and save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration.

Three funding streams are explained in greater detail in the report: the Second Chance Act program (DOJ), the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) program (DOL), and the Offender Reentry Program (ORP) (HHS). The report goes into detail on each of these funding opportunities, including what programs each supports and what organizations qualify for each (see Tables 3-5). The Federal reentry grant programs that focus on employment support, including education and vocational training, are DOJ's Second Chance Act, DOL's RExO, and HHS's Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood Grants. Variations exist in the Federal reentry grant programs, including programs that offer support with housing, health, mental or behavioral health, substance abuse, life, family and parenting skills, and reentry courts.

Two resources of note are the [Federal Interagency Reentry Council](#) and the [Association of State Correctional Administrators Reentry and Community Corrections Committee](#). The Council's accomplishments include:

- An interagency working group that developed an action plan designed to improve access to federal benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, food assistance, veterans, Social Security, and others that can help stabilize the reentry population, and by extension their families, after release. The action plan includes concrete coordination, training, and public education opportunities that will improve access by clarifying policies; increasing communications across agencies at the federal, regional, and state levels; and providing information and tools to direct service providers.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs issued a policy change in April that expands eligibility for its health care to include individuals in community-based settings.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs revised its administrative policy limiting its prison outreach to the 6 months prior to a veteran's release. The revised policy will allow assessment and release planning with incarcerated veterans to begin earlier, thus enhancing the odds of successful reentry and reintegration.

The Association of State Correctional Administrators works to identify and implement best practices in reentry and community-based programs to reduce the number of inmates returning to prison after release.