



**Illinois Reentry Council Annual Report**  
January 2023 – December 2023

**Table of Contents**

I. Introductory Summary .....	2
II. 2023 Reentry Milestones & Achievements in Illinois .....	2
Programming & Implementation.....	2
Research and Reports .....	6
Government positions .....	6
Litigation.....	7
Legislation Passed Into Law.....	7
Reentry Council Membership Expands .....	8
III. History and Foundation of the Council.....	8
Charge and Principles .....	8
Council Structure.....	8
IV. Conclusion.....	9
V. Appendices.....	10
Appendix 1: Chicago Beyond & JustLeadershipUSA Press Release .....	10
Appendix 2: Healing Beyond Harm Apology Bank.....	12
Appendix 3: IRC Innovations Grant Report .....	13
Appendix 4: Initial Charge and Principles.....	23
Appendix 5: Revised Charge.....	24
Appendix 6: Strategic Plan .....	25



## I. Introductory Summary

There are over 29,000 people in Illinois prisons and over 225,000 under some form of criminal legal system supervision. The ramifications of such mass incarceration in Illinois have been well-established, with research and data documenting its adverse impact on low-income, primarily Black and Latine, and other marginalized communities. The onus is often left with formerly incarcerated individuals and their loved ones to navigate the conditions of their release and make successful transitions back into the community. Addressing these complex and many needs requires a comprehensive design to reconfigure the reentry process, including both policy and practice.

Established in March 2021, the Illinois Reentry Council (IRC) is a 200-member organization that convenes people committed to engaging with this challenge. The thoughts and ideas of formerly incarcerated people are prioritized in this process, which also acknowledges the trauma caused by the criminal legal system. Members are dedicated to creating an equitable and effective reentry support system for people leaving prisons and jails and supporting them in their return to the community. The IRC meets quarterly to provide a platform for fostering relationships among government, policy makers, non-profit agencies, and the private sector; to share relevant research and presentations on reentry; to identify pressing challenges in reentry; identify best and promising practices in reentry; to develop and implement policies and practices that address the pressing challenges; and to exchange information about reentry work. Six working groups advance the IRC's work which is guided by the IRC Strategic Plan.

This *Illinois Reentry Council Annual Report* outlines progress towards this commitment in 2023 and reemphasizes the principles and goals that guide the work.

## II. 2023 Reentry Milestones & Achievements in Illinois

### Programming & Implementation

- The **Illinois Housing Development Authority's** (IHDA) Housing for Justice-Involved Individuals Program that launched in January 2022 to create new homes for people exiting carceral settings is preparing for a second round of funding disbursement. IHDA awarded \$12 million in the first round, creating 348 new and rehabbed beds, and committed \$9 million for a second funding round to be announced in the first quarter of 2024.
- The **Illinois Facilities Fund** is providing technical assistance to the Illinois Housing Development Authority's Housing for Justice Involved Individuals Program. This involved meeting with grant recipients to learn from their experiences with the program and developing recommendations to strengthen the program in the future.
- The **Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority** released \$10.1 million for reentry programming in FY 2023 through the R3 program. Grantees used funding to support organizational capacity building, program monitoring, evaluation, and more.
- The **City of Chicago** launched their reentry resources website: [chicago.gov/reentry](https://chicago.gov/reentry).
- The **City of Chicago's Office of Reentry** created guidelines for the City to assess job candidates with conviction records and have included language on the City's website that makes clear that people with criminal backgrounds have an opportunity to be considered and hired for positions and should apply. The Office also developed a new Fair Chance Hiring



Policy that establishes a 5-year lookback for almost all city positions and a 7-year lookback for positions in the Mayor's Office.

- The **City of Chicago's Office of Reentry's** Community Support Centers are now funded to support 300 participants through the end of 2024.
- The **Chicago Department of Family & Support Services** partnered with the **Safer Foundation** to open a fifth Community Reentry Support Center for the City of Chicago.
- The **City of Chicago** in April 2023 passed the Economic Opportunities for Returning Residents [Ordinance](#), which removes significant restrictions that barred returning residents from applying for City contracts and licenses. It also expands workplace anti-discrimination protections for individuals with prior conviction histories, and promotes the use of equitable, person-first language among City programs serving returning residents.
- The **City of Chicago** launched its SPRING Forward Program. Through the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, SPRING Forward allocates \$20 million in American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funding for housing and employment support services for people leaving IDOC and Cook County Jail. The city is contracting with CARA Collective and Lawndale Christian Legal Clinic to deliver services and work with clients.
- The **Illinois Department of Corrections** continued implementation of its State ID program for people leaving their custody. Despite some barriers with the Social Security Administration, more than 1,800 people left IDOC custody with a state ID, and 200 more have IDs ready for them upon release.
- The **Illinois Department of Corrections** established reentry information rooms in every facility.
- The **Illinois Department of Human Services** continued collaboration with the **Illinois Department of Corrections** to enroll people in Medicaid before leaving IDOC custody. More than 17,000 people have been enrolled since the program launched at the beginning of 2020. IDHS and IDOC expanded their collaboration this year to ensure incarcerated people can apply for food benefits through SNAP. Since April 2023, over 5,000 people have been enrolled in SNAP prior to their release from IDOC custody.
- The **Cook County Justice Advisory Council**, in partnership with the Housing Authority of Cook County, created and launched their Cook County Reconnect program. Using \$23 million in ARPA funding, this program will provide rental assistance and support services for people who have left IDOC custody within the last 2 years.
- The **Corporate Coalition's** Fair Chance Hiring Initiative launched its first cohort. The first cohort met for nine months, sharing best practices for employers to recruit, hire and retain fair chance talent. They will continue to support "alumni" from Cohort 1 through check-ins and coaching, speaking engagements, and bringing them in to share lessons with the 2024 cohort. The Corporate Coalition has recruited six employers to join a second cohort, beginning January 2024. Alongside these educational cohorts, the Corporate Coalition is working to expand fair chance contracting by (a) working with industry associations and (b) supporting specific company pilots, both of which are focused on examining existing contracting practices and developing ways to make vendor staffing processes more inclusive and accessible to individuals with records.



- The **Illinois Department of Corrections** and the **Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity** collaborated on a project to expand and extend more employment resources to incarcerated people. The program utilizes webinars on WebEx TVs for virtual trainings and connections to community-based organizations.
- Implementation of the **Joe Coleman Medical Act** continued throughout 2023, after going into effect January 1, 2022. 63 people have been granted compassionate release under the program. Release under the Act requires that people receive adequate healthcare once they return to the community, which can delay departure dates. As of October 2023, there was no one in this delayed status.
- **Chicago Beyond** launched a collaboration with the Cook County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) to enrich visits between detained people and their families, including a review of all CCSO rules, procedures, and staff trainings on trauma-informed visitation practices.
- **Chicago Beyond** invested \$450,000 in JustLeadershipUSA to create a pilot program that invests directly in people who have experience with the criminal legal system through training and technical assistance, mentoring, and capacity building. The investment includes two-year grants for five local leaders to receive hands-on training and support in their community-based work that is helping to advance comprehensive racial equity and economic mobility within their communities (see Appendix 1)
- **Challenge II Change** purchased a four-unit property with funds received from IHDA's Housing for Justice-Involved Individuals Program. This residential property can house 8 people at any given time. CIIC was also able to establish offices in Aurora.
- **WIN Recovery** opened a 7,000 square foot Resilience Resource center for individuals in Cook County who need assistance with family reunification. This center will offer alternatives to prison and wraparound services. WIN Recovery also added three new transitional safe houses in Cook County for women and LGBTQ returning residents.
- **Defy Ventures** recruited 81 volunteers from the business and nonprofit sectors to provide mentoring and coaching services at eight events at three Illinois Department of Corrections facilities this year. As part of their post-release support, Defy connected with and continues to work with over 30 released participants.
- Since Governor Pritzker's 2022 Executive Order to Fight Homelessness in Illinois, **Statewide Chief of Homelessness Christine Haley** worked to establish the Interagency Task Force on Homelessness and a Community Advisory Council. The IRC provided short, intermediate, and long-term recommendations to reduce barriers and create opportunities for people subject to banishment laws, including people with sex offense convictions.
- The **Federal Problem-Solving Courts Foundation** formed a 501(c)(3) organization to fund reentry supports and programming for people released on federal supervised release from the Bureau of Prisons. They raised enough private donations to meet the very basic needs of these programs, which costs notably less than the cost to hold a person in custody for a year.
- **Healing Beyond Harm**, a multi-agency collaboration between the Lieutenant Governor's JEO Office, the Prisoner Review Board (PRB), the Illinois Department of Corrections, Adler Institute, Illinois Attorney General, and the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, launched their Apology Bank allowing incarcerated people to send letters to those they have harmed. The PRB will house these, to distribute to victims when they request (see Appendix 2).



- The **Winnebago Housing Authority** (now part of NI Reach) received a “moving to work” designation. This allows the authority to incentivize landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers, which are used by many returning residents.
- The **Illinois Department of Health and Family Services** (HFS) applied for a Medicaid 1115 waiver to expand both the services provided by Medicaid and the providers that can accept Medicaid. If approved, the waiver would allow \$40 million of state and federal funding to be used for housing and support services. The IRC is supporting this effort by connecting HFS to community organizations that serve returning residents.
- The **Illinois Reentry Council’s Innovations Committee** awarded \$70,000 to 8 community-based organizations working with returning residents and their families. This Committee was formed and led by directly-impacted people, who set criteria for inviting grantees and distributing funding. The funding could be used freely by grantees, and the 8 organizations served their clients by providing housing support, enrichment programming for children of incarcerated parents, delivery of necessities, and healing opportunities through a gardening project, among other things (see Appendix 3).
- The **Illinois Reentry Council** produced a database outlining all the government funding for reentry programs within the state of Illinois, which totaled \$500 million in 2023.
- The **Illinois Reentry Council** created subgroups within two working groups that focus on implementing a single Strategic Plan priority. Within the Economic Opportunity & Upward Mobility workgroup, subgroups focus on increasing job training resources within IDOC, helping to prepare employers to hire and retain returning residents, and exploring programs and funding for increased wages for incarcerated workers. Within the Housing workgroup, subgroups focus on preserving affordable housing contracts, decreasing discrimination and removing barriers for returning residents to access housing, implementing the Housing Assessment Tool for people leaving IDOC, establishing a housing continuum for people leaving incarceration, identifying affordable housing, and working to encourage recipients of government funding to house returning residents.
- Through a **subgroup of the Economic Opportunity & Upward Mobility workgroup**, some IRC members explored the potential for the Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP) in Illinois. Federal PIECP certification allows private companies to employ incarcerated people, provide valuable work experience, and pay much higher wages than prison-run jobs. However, due to exploitation and labor concerns, the subgroup determined that Illinois currently does not have an appetite for PIECP.
- The **IRC Economic Opportunity & Upward Mobility workgroup** drafted an employer messaging toolkit, which can be used to communicate to employers the benefits of employing people with criminal records and the supports that they need.
- The **Illinois Justice Project’s** Reentry Housing Demonstration Pilot Program concluded and released an evaluation report showing that the program halved the recidivism rate of its participants (20%) in comparison with the Illinois average (40%). Key to the program’s success was a 12-month rental subsidy and the presence of counsellors, a facilitator familiar with the parole operations in IDOC and with wraparound services.



- The **Education Justice Project (EJP)** opened applications for their grants, which are up to \$500 and offered to EJP alumni (both currently and formerly incarcerated) to use however they need to support their reentry from incarceration.
- The **Education Justice Project** distributed 12,000+ copies of its re-entry guide, *Mapping Your Future*, to currently incarcerated individuals in Illinois.
- **Live Free Illinois** launched a Decarceration Fellowship that aims to improve individual outcomes and opportunities for recently returning citizens.
- **Cook County Jail** launched a new pilot program which enables returning citizens to apply for a free state ID on their way back to the community.
- The final Illinoisan serving a life sentence for a three-strike drug offense was released from prison. This marks the end of the three-strikes era in Illinois.

### **Research and Reports**

- The **City of Chicago's Interagency Reentry Council** released its [2023 Departmental Goals](#), requiring all 17 city departments to create actionable goals to improve their services access for returning residents.
- The **Education Justice Project** updated and released its [reentry guide](#), *Mapping Your Future*, which aims to help people have a successful reentry journey.
- The **Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority** released "*Employment of Individuals After Release from Illinois Prisons: Employee Characteristics, Occupations, and Wages*" ([link](#)), which tracked employment outcomes over 3 years for people who left IDOC custody in 2018. It found that only 54% of people were employed for at least one quarter over those 3 years. Only 10% of people were employed all 12 quarters of the observed period. This underscores the significant need for additional programs, policies and practices that help returning residents achieve upward economic mobility.
- The **Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority** published "*Differences in Recidivism Outcomes of Illinois Prison Work Release Centers by Participant Characteristics*" ([link](#)).

### **Government positions**

- The **Chicago City Council** added 3 positions to the Mayor's Office of Reentry and invested \$5 million for reentry programs funded by city cannabis tax revenues.
- The **Illinois Department of Human Services** created a Director of Reentry position and hired Nathan "Marty" Norman, who will coordinate across IDHS departments to ensure their programming is accessible and considerate to the needs of returning residents.
- The **Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority** created a new Reentry Coordinator position, hiring hired Shenita Jackson for this role.
- The **US Department of Housing and Urban Development** detailed a staff person to the City of Chicago to work on the All INside plan, aiming to reduce unsheltered homelessness by 25 percent by 2025. A key area of focus for this role is to establish clear pathways for individuals returning from jails and prisons and people with criminal records.
- **Orlando Mayorga**, former JEO Program Manager at the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and Co-Chair of the Support Services workgroup, transitioned to the Illinois Department of





Human Services where he is working on reentry and serves as the Executive Director of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission.

- **Willette Benford**, former Director of Reentry for the Chicago Mayor's Office, and Co-Chair of the Special Considerations workgroup, transitioned to a new position at the Office of the First Lady, M.K. Pritzker, as a Senior Advisor focusing on women's issues and reentry.
- **James Pagano** transitioned from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) to the Illinois Department of Human Services, made possible by his prior work with IDHS through the Illinois Reentry Council. **Sophia Manuel** transitioned into his position at IDOC.

### Litigation

- The **Illinois Department of Corrections** is now in compliance with the requirement outlined in *Barnes v Jeffreys*, that they remove restrictions against people on the sex offense registry from living in the same place.
- The **Illinois Department of Corrections** is now in compliance with *Murphy v Raoul*, which bars IDOC from refusing to release people for whom they cannot find an IDOC-approved residence.
- The **Illinois Department of Corrections** is now in compliance with *Stone v Jeffreys*, which required IDOC to comply and release people on the sex offense registry in a timely manner. IDOC expanded housing contracts in order to meet this order.
- The **Uptown People's Law Center**, successfully argued in *Hawkins v Mado Healthcare Buena Park*, with the Cook County Commission on Human Rights, that Specialized Mental Health Rehabilitation Facilities are covered by the Cook County Just Housing Amendment and thus these facilities cannot discriminate against people with records.

### Legislation Passed Into Law

- The **Illinois General Assembly** passed Senate Bill 646 in August 2023, creating the Healing-Centered Illinois Task Force "to advance the State's efforts to become trauma-informed and healing-centered through improved alignment of existing efforts, common definitions and metrics, and strategic planning for long-term transformation." The [Task Force](#) will operate for one year, starting January 2024, and will issue recommendations to make Illinois government and communities healing-centered.
- The **Illinois Coalition to End Permanent Punishments** successfully advocated for the passage of the FREE Act in the Illinois General Assembly. This removes one permanent punishment for people with felony convictions, allowing them to serve as executors of loved ones' estates.
- The Illinois General Assembly passed **House Bill 3026** into law in July 2023. The bill recalculates Earned Discretionary Sentence Credits awarded to people who were incarcerated and engaged in work and education programs prior to July 1, 2021, permitting them to be eligible for early release.
- **Senate Bill 423** goes into effect on January 1, 2024. The bill is intended to overhaul the function and responsibilities of the Prisoner Review Board, designed to increase transparency in the decision-making process and expedite determinations.



### **Reentry Council Membership Expands**

- The Illinois Reentry Council has grown to more than 200 members in the course of 2023.
- Secretary Dulce Quintero (IL Dept. of Human Services) and Director Latoya Hughes (IL Dept. of Corrections) were added as IRC Co-Chairs, joining Director Yaacov Delaney (JEO Initiative, Lt. Gov.'s Office), Chairman King Harris (IL Housing Development Authority), Marlon Chamberlain (Coalition to End Permanent Punishments), and Ahmadou Dramé (Illinois Justice Project) in leadership.
- The Illinois Justice Project brought on Program Specialist Isabel Kennon to manage the work and its strategy.
- With additions this year, the Illinois Reentry Council now includes representation from several government agencies, including the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Department of Corrections, the Illinois Department of Economic Services, the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Illinois Housing Development Authority, and the Illinois Lieutenant Governor's Office. The Council also has a variety of representatives from entities including the Illinois General Assembly, county and local government agencies, public housing authorities, and county judicial systems.
- The Council includes community-based organizations from Chicago, Cook County, Aurora, Belleville, Boone County, Champaign County, Peoria, Springfield, and Winnebago County.

### **III. History and Foundation of the Council**

#### **Charge and Principles**

The Illinois Reentry Council began with a charge (see Appendix 4) to bring together those who intend to create an equitable and effective process for people leaving prisons and jails and to support them in their return to the community. Since its inception, the charge has evolved (see Appendix 5) to a commitment to a transformative, holistic, and asset-based approach to reentry by addressing structural barriers that impede one's reintegration, fostering collaboration, following the leadership of system-impacted individuals, and ensuring self-determination is infused within reentry policies, programming, and practices.

After its formation, the Council studied best practices from across the country and established six working groups to study and identify key and essential issues for returning residents in Illinois. This work became the foundation for a Strategic Plan (see Appendix 6) that still guides the work today.

#### **Council Structure**

The Illinois Reentry Council is chaired by six Illinois leaders who work in policy, advocacy, and government, and have a wide range of lived experiences, including having been incarcerated. The Council is further divided into six standing workgroups to examine specific issue areas (Economic Opportunity & Upward Mobility, Financing for Reentry, Support Services, Special Considerations, Public Agencies' Policies, Practices, and Programming, and Housing). Two workgroups have established further subgroups to focus on implementing a single Strategic Plan priority, detailed above in Milestones & Achievements.





#### **IV. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Council ends 2023 with much to celebrate. Reentry work in Illinois over the past year has expanded with the addition of more voices and experts contributing to the Council's efforts to both envision and implement a smarter and more effective reentry continuum. The work has deepened with the numerous achievements and milestones by all partners, whose dedication to the mission is providing real change.



## V. Appendices

### *Appendix 1: Chicago Beyond & JustLeadershipUSA [Press Release](#)*



#### **PRESS RELEASE — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Chicago-Based Program will Train Emerging Leaders to Build a Movement for Justice in Cities Nationwide**

**CHICAGO** (October 11, 2023) – Chicago Beyond, a philanthropic organization that works to ensure all young people and community members are free to live full lives, today announced a \$450,000 investment in JustLeadershipUSA (JLUSA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to decarcerating the United States by educating, elevating, and empowering the people and communities most impacted by systemic racism. The investment will support a pilot program that will build a strong bench of formerly incarcerated (FI) and directly impacted (DI) individuals who can make meaningful change in their community and beyond.

Too often, criminal justice policies and attempts at national reform do not center those impacted by the carceral system. These gaps create missed opportunities for DI individuals to create and implement effective solutions for reform. JLUSA has recognized the need for an approach that centers those who have experienced the criminal justice system, which equips and enables them to be leaders who drive change based on the integrated needs they know exist in their community.

Over the course of two years, and with the support of Chicago Beyond, JLUSA will create a pilot program that invests directly in people who have experience with the criminal legal system through training and technical assistance, mentoring, and capacity building.

Chicago Beyond's investment also includes two-year grants that will be given to five local leaders making a difference in their communities through their work. JLUSA will provide the five



leaders with hands-on training while supporting them in their community-based work that is helping to advance comprehensive racial equity and economic mobility within their communities.

“Our partnership with JustLeadershipUSA embodies a transformative shift, placing the voices and experiences of those who’ve been affected by the criminal justice system front and center,” said Liz Dozier, Founder and CEO of Chicago Beyond. “We’re committed to providing tools, resources and support for those who were formerly incarcerated and to continue to advocate for change across the country.”

The pilot program will begin by recruiting local leaders who have direct experience of the criminal legal system to attend a two-day, in-person Emerging Leaders™ (EL) training on leadership, advocacy, and policy, with a specific focus on the issues directly impacting Chicago, and who also will be eligible to apply for the grants.

The grant awardees will participate in two EL Training Programs, EL Intensive workshop, and a trauma and self-care healing retreat. The EL Training Program will include various workshops and events focused on leadership, communications, policy, fundraising and grant writing, nonprofit board development, and operations. Awardees will also meet monthly with an Executive Coach assigned by JLUSA. The objective of these learning events and coaching sessions is to equip participants with the tools to build and lead a movement for justice in the Chicagoland area.

“JustLeadershipUSA is so excited to be partnering with Chicago Beyond to develop a deep bench of justice-impacted leaders to continue the fight for criminal justice reform in the Chicagoland community,” said JLUSA President and CEO DeAnna Hoskins. “Over the years, we’ve had some amazing leaders from Chicago come through JLUSA programs, and we can’t wait to meet and work with these five emerging leaders to help them reach the next level in their justice work.”

JLUSA is planning a long-term strategic investment in areas where the consequences of the injustice of the criminal legal system, systemic oppression, and historical racism are most keenly felt. In light of this vision, JLUSA plans to spend two years investing in leaders in the Chicago and Illinois area, to grow the movement and capacity of DI leaders, to raise the voices of their communities, to end mass incarceration and systemic oppression.

To learn more about the multi-year funding partnership, please visit [chicagobeyond.org](http://chicagobeyond.org). To learn more about JLUSA’s Emerging Leaders™ training, please visit [jlusa.org/emergingleaders](http://jlusa.org/emergingleaders). The Chicago EL training is scheduled for February 2-3, 2024. More details to be announced.



## ***Appendix 2: Healing Beyond Harm Apology Bank***

### HEALING BEYOND HARM

Healing Beyond Harm is a multi-agency collaboration that creates spaces to heal. There are two main programs that Healing Beyond Harm offers: The Apology Letter Bank, and Harm Dialogues. Both are created to support healing and learning after harm has occurred.

#### **What is the Apology Letter Bank?**

An Apology Letter Bank (ALB) is a RJ practice that allows a person who is incarcerated to write a letter of apology to crime survivors. For crime survivors who would like an apology for harm committed against them, the ALB provides an opportunity to receive it.

- Always at crime survivor's behest
- Can eventually lead to Restorative Conference
- Sufficient for emotional resolution of certain crime

#### **Who is eligible to submit a letter of apology?**

Anyone who is currently incarcerated in the IDOC Logan and Stateville locations

#### **Where do I submit a letter of apology?**

To our program partners North Park University in Logan and PNAP in Stateville who will send them to the HBH Coordinator

#### **What occurs once an apology letter is submitted?**

It is submitted to the Prisoner Review Board for review and vetting for any appeal processes or orders of protection

#### **What is the Healing Beyond Harm Accountability Group?**

It is our hope that during the HBH workshops that groups will continue to build community to sustain relationships that support this and other processes

#### **What are Harm Dialogues?**

A face-to-face interactive conference between the crime survivor(s) and the person who committed the harm, in which they discuss the impact of the crime.

- Always crime survivor-initiated
- Not for the purposes of furthering appeals/parole
- Focus is the emotional/mental well-being of all participants

#### **Who can request a Harm Dialogue?**

After a survivor has received a letter they may request a Harm Dialogue

#### **If a Harm Dialogue is requested, do you have to participate?**

All processes are voluntary, you may decline the request

#### **Who are the collaborating partners?**

The Justice and Equity Office of the Lieutenant Governor Adler Institute of Public Safety and Social Justice Illinois Department of Corrections Illinois Attorney General Cook County States Attorney Office and subsequently States Attorney Offices statewide



*Appendix 3: IRC Innovations Grant Report*



**Innovation Grants  
2023**

Made possible by the  
MacArthur Foundation





# Table of Contents

Mission ..... Page 2

Strategy..... Page 2

Committee Co-Chairs ..... Page 2

Art from the Heart ..... Page 3

Beyond the Walls ..... Page 4

Education Justice Project ..... Page 5

Giving Others Dreams ..... Page 6

Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation ..... Page 7

Restore Justice ..... Page 8

Sista I Got You ..... Page 9

Talk2me Foundation ..... Page 10



## Mission

To identify high-potential, innovative, and replicable programs serving individuals reentering from incarceration to:

- 1) Facilitate experimentation of new models
- 2) Identify models ready to scale up
- 3) Support smaller, financially stable organizations
- 4) Directly support individuals exiting incarceration

## Strategy

- MacArthur provided \$70,000 to the Illinois Reentry Council for microgrants in the reentry space.
- Co-Chairs set the goal: identify programs uniquely serving returning residents to facilitate experimentation of new models, identify models that are poised to scale, support smaller, financially stable organizations, and directly support individuals exiting incarceration.
- Co-Chairs created the grant application and decision process, prioritizing geographic diversity, and reviewing applicants in two rounds.

## Committee Chairs



Celia  
Colon



Quianya  
Enge



Joseph  
Mapp



Orlando  
Mayorga



Floyd  
Stafford



# Giving Others Dreams



## Mission:

Empowering Women ~ Breaking Cycles ~ Restoring Hope & Community ~ Ending Generational Harm!



## Funding Vision:

The vision for the IRC funding was to empower individuals in their reentry journey by covering transportation, childcare, providing meals during workshops, offering stipends, and transforming the "big momma project" into a mobile Reentry Services center.

## Impact:

G.O.D. served over 300 people when hosting the first national Wear Orange event for the South Chicago community in partnership with over 25 service providers. This collective commitment to addressing community needs connected communities and families to resources ranging from health services to educational opportunities. It also featured bouncy houses, video gaming trucks, and live performances from local artists.

Through the grant, G.O.D. supported clients in attending various events and workshops, enhancing their access to resources, transportation to treatment centers, job interviews, workshops, and community events. They funded lunch/snacks during training classes and provided stipends for clients attending workshops like Weekly Wellness Wednesday Workshops and Family Friday's game nights. They also converted the "Big Momma Project" with a paint job, demolition and renovation of the bus, and tune-up costs, ahead of the Project's spring launch.





# Education Justice Project



## Mission:

To build a model college-in-prison program demonstrating the positive impacts of higher education on incarcerated people, their families, neighborhoods, host institutions, and society as a whole.



## Funding Vision:

With support from the IRC Innovation Council, the Education Justice Project planned to offer emergency funding to individuals in urgent financial need who had been released from IDOC facilities. We also planned to conduct an assessment of our reentry emergency grant program, which has been running since 2020.

## Impact:

The Education Justice Project provided 22 Emergency Grants to individuals coming home from prison in Illinois, from April to September. One of these people had been moving between shelters and requested \$500 to purchase a shirt and tie to get a job. He wrote, “I’m currently homeless trying to find employment I walk to the Secretary of State and retrieve a state Id I’ve been applying for multiple job I still have on the jail cloths that I was release in.”

Another person wrote, “Having been exonerated of a crime from my youth (as an ageing adolescent at 19 years of age) I have been thrust upon my aging mother and her fixed income, as I desperately search for work online primarily, because transportation is/has been an issue, amongst other costs of living expenses, disability health care treatment for Crohn’s disease and its related illnesses, as well as other mental health related issues that effect me physically, yet I struggle and strive to make some progress daily into adaptation of societal literacy from a maximum penitentiary mentality.”





# Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation



## Mission:

To restore human dignity through hospitality, hope, and healing.



## Funding Vision:

PBMR's Transitional Housing Program provides PBMR-owned apartments and case management to people coming home after 20+ years of incarceration, including providing basic needs and setting long-term goals.

## Impact:

During this period approximately 45 returning residents participated in the PBMR Housing Program and became active participants in the larger PBMR community. Thanks to the IRC partnership and the Innovation Grant, PBMR was better equipped to provide the resources needed to support these members of our community as they move forward in their lives.

PBMR welcomed a participant returning from prison and their mother into one of multi-bedroom family units. The participant has joined PBMR's staff and their mother enrolled in the Family Forward Program. This year a resident in our Sankofa Home for Women began transitioning into long-term independent living. PBMR Family Forward Advocates accompanied this member in the daunting search for safe, affordable, dignified housing. They ensured she could cover the security deposits, moving costs, home goods, and more. PBMR Case Managers also worked diligently to ensure a participant (and former resident of our Hospitality House) could enter a dignified Senior Living Center. This move provided a sense of security and stability and was a milestone for this participant and his family.







# Restore Justice



## Mission:

To dismantle our state's system of criminal laws that disproportionately punish Black and poor Illinoisans while doing little to make communities safer.



## Funding Vision:

Restore Justice's Future Leaders Apprenticeship Program (FLAP) provides a small number of returning citizens, who have deep commitment to social justice and high potential for impact in the nonprofit sector, with a unique opportunity to turn their skills and passions for social good into leadership opportunities. The program's intensive nature means it is expensive to run.

## Impact:

Restore Justice has supported four apprenticeships through FLAP with the Innovation grant funding, and anticipates having two or three new apprentices before the initial grant period is up.

One of the apprentices who was finishing up when we received the grant, Maurice Hughes, came to us after being incarcerated for 27 years. He took a job as Outreach Coordinator at Uptown People's Law Center, where he works on educating people about returning residents' housing rights.

One of our current apprentices, Eric Anderson, was released from prison in April after 28 years. Working with Sister Janet Ryan from Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation, Eric helps run Peace Circle Keeper trainings inside IDOC facilities, including Kewanee, Stateville, and Logan. He also helps facilitate restorative justice circles within IDOC facilities with people who are incarcerated, Illinois legislators, and correctional facility staff.





# Sista I Got You



## Mission:

We offer women a First chance at having a Successful Life while addressing the systematic barriers that prevent a triumphant turnaround. It's never too late to be whom you should have been.



## Funding Vision:

Operational support including: marketing for Sista I Got You; care packages; transportation for women attend Pathway sessions and Workshops; help with our joint community events; and support women with job interviews, childcare, stipends and lunch. Our programs are open to all Women and Girls that have been impacted in any way, (Single Parents, Incarcerated, Homemakers, Addiction and Abused) a "First Chance" at having a Successful Career and Life. Through Our Pathway, Your Journey courses the only way is upward. We have Sisterhood groups, First Step packages and Mother/Child Bonding Exercises.

## Impact:

Sista I Got You was able to service and assist 45 women and girls in their crime prevention/re-entry changing narrative sessions. Participants went to a free women empowering movement where they were introduced to pre-apprenticeships and high paying careers, received G.E.D. tutoring sessions, job readiness trainings, and professional clothes.

Sista I Got You also partnered with sister organizations in hosting the National Wear Orange Event to bring awareness to gun violence and support survivors, where they served over 300 people.





# Talk2me Foundation



## Mission:

To break the cycle of generational incarceration by supporting the children, parents, and caregivers of incarcerated loved ones. We believe that through education, therapy, and community building, we can help women overcome the challenges they face and achieve their full potential. We offer a variety of services, including support groups, counseling, job training, and mentorship programs. Our team is made up of experienced professionals who are passionate about helping women thrive. We believe that every woman deserves the opportunity to succeed and we are committed to making that a reality.



## Funding Vision:

Programmatic support for clients, to cover the cost of and childcare, transportation-insurance for youth on camping trip, Lunch, stipend, for clients to attend workshops and events

## Impact:

Talk2me Foundation organized 3 events serving over 50 kids and supporting women with housing. For one of those events, Talk2me took 35 youth on a 2 day camping trip to Camp Ducan, where they provided childcare, transportation, insurance, lunch and dinner, and stipends. At Camp Ducan, youth attended workshops and events.

Talk2me also purchased shoes and bookbags for youth returning to school.







#### ***Appendix 4: Initial Charge and Principles***



The Illinois Reentry Council will bring together those who intend to create an equitable and effective process for people leaving prisons and jails to support them in their return to the community. Members will determine a long-term strategy to design an improved system and support its implementation.

Members will include those impacted by and responsible for the process, including people leaving incarceration; executive, judicial and legislative elected officials; government administrators; service providers; law enforcement; researchers; and advocates.

The Council will meet quarterly to:

Establish, and revise as necessary, a set of principles to guide the Council's work.

Do an initial review and report regularly on the current status of reentry in Illinois.

Explicitly address racism in the system.

Monitor the progress of the reentry reform strategy.

Provide a forum for those who have experienced the reentry system to present information about how to improve it.

At meetings—and in work groups as necessary—scrutinize and assess the various elements of the system including, but not limited to:

Individualized prerelease support

The purpose and design of any [individualized] post-release supervision

Provision of necessary support for those immediately released, including public services such as identification materials, healthcare, income support, housing, employment training and job placement, and other wraparound services

Obstacles in the system which make it impossible or extremely difficult for people to successfully reenter, including policies and practices

Review existing international, national, and local research about reentry.

Help design and monitor an evaluation system, informed by and including those who have experienced reentry, to assess the efficacy of elements of the reentry system.

Determine necessary resources to support a model reentry system and identify ways to secure those resources.

Publish a report annually that describes the implementation and human outcomes of the reentry strategy progress.

The Council created the following initial principles:

##### **Overall:**

People who have been convicted and served time in prison are entitled to support to permit them to return successfully to the community.



The measure of effectiveness of the state and local corrections systems and the individuals working in those systems will be successful reentry of people who have been incarcerated, measured by the individual positive outcomes for people [which lead to no recidivism].

Structures and supports developed for individuals and their families should be sustainable, both fiscally and politically.

Impacted individuals and families should be centered in policy and service development.

#### While incarcerated:

The goal of incarceration should be rehabilitation, to promote successful reentry and community safety.

The prison/sentencing systems should be designed to create efficient and supportive pathways for people to leave incarceration when they are ready to successfully reenter, rather than on an arbitrary date set at the time of conviction.

When people are incarcerated, the prison system should be engaged in preparing them for successful reentry through effective, individualized case planning based on each individual's assets.

Specific, individualized, effective support services and programming such as healthcare or education should be available to people both because they are indicated by objective assessment and also so people can choose to pursue their personal goals during their incarceration.

Coordination and more partnerships between community-based organizations and the prison system should be established to create a process to seamlessly connect individuals to opportunities and supports.

#### Once released:

Connections to and delivery of services and other supports should be provided by organizations in communities. The goal of post-release supervision should be to accomplish successful reintegration into the community and positive individual outcomes.

Everyone leaving prison should be provided financial support and guidance to secure housing for at least one year if needed.

Support services to address individual needs and personal goals should be provided until successful, independent reentry is attained. In some cases, this may mean extended medical or financial support, as determined by objective and validated standards.

### ***Appendix 5: Revised Charge***

**More Recent Commitment Statement:** We are committed to fostering collaboration, following the leadership of system-impacted individuals, and ensuring self-determination is infused within reentry policies, programming, and practices. We understand that reimagining reentry to be transformative requires acknowledging the disenfranchisement and marginalization exacerbated for people leaving incarceration and working through obstacles of building empowering supports through cultural, narrative, and structural changes. We are grateful for the contribution of our members and partners in building this Council's vision and look forward to actualizing our goals together.



## ***Appendix 6: Strategic Plan***



### **STRATEGIC PLAN 12/11/2022**

The Illinois Reentry Council is a body composed of over one hundred people from throughout Illinois committed to developing and supporting effective reentry supports and services for people with records. Chaired by a diverse group of individuals, including people with lived experience and leaders in state government, the Council holds influence over the policies and practices listed in this strategic plan that impact the lives of returning residents. The Council's co-chairs include Director Yaacov Delaney (JEO Initiative, Lt. Gov.'s Office), Chairman King Harris (IL Housing Development Authority), Secretary Grace Hou (IL Dept. of Human Services), Director Rob Jeffreys (IL Dept. of Corrections), Marlon Chamberlain (Heartland Alliance), and Ahmadou Dramé (Illinois Justice Project). These individuals work alongside the Council to implement the priorities for action and execute the Council's goals.

Members include people who have been incarcerated, those elected and appointed with authority to change the operation of existing systems, advocates, those representing groups like realtors and local mayors, service providers, academics, and those representing philanthropy. The power of this Council is derived from the shared commitment of its members to create enduring and effective reentry supports and processes for all people who have been incarcerated. While some members wield power in government, others have the knowledge necessary to design practical policies, practices, and programs; others can provide necessary services or find housing; others can mobilize public will; and others can produce potent research to establish elements for and measurements of success. Only through the combined efforts and mutual respect of its members is change possible. Council members participate in a transformative, holistic, and asset-based approach to reentry by addressing structural barriers that impede one's reintegration, fostering collaboration, following the leadership of system-impacted individuals, emphasizing the intersectionality in how individuals are impacted, and ensuring self-determination is infused within reentry policies, programming, and practices. Transformative reentry requires acknowledging the disenfranchisement and marginalization of formerly incarcerated people and removing obstacles by building empowering supports through cultural, narrative, and structural changes.

As the Council enters its second year, this plan will provide a framework for implementation of a strengthened network of reentry policies and practices. The reentry plan reflects on-going work in Illinois and is intended to be complementary and supportive, not exclusive of other efforts. It will remain flexible and subject to change as the Council refines its work and as opportunities for change present themselves.

The purpose of the Council is to:

- Identify institutional and systemic barriers to reentry and devise policies and practices to circumvent or eliminate those obstacles.



- Identify other common challenges individuals face in reentry and collaborate to eliminate those barriers.
- Review information and hear from stakeholders about various aspects of reentry in Illinois and about reentry resources in other jurisdictions which might offer innovative ideas that could be applicable to Illinois.
- Equip IRC members with the knowledge and skills needed to advocate for improved reentry in Illinois.
- Create and oversee this strategic plan to guide the Council's work, including an annual review that evaluates its progress.
- Devise and oversee implementation of policies and practices which will permit all people to successfully reenter communities from incarceration.
- Create a forum and website where people interested in strengthening reentry processes and supports can meet one another and share information about their goals and methods for achieving the goals.

The Council includes six workgroups which:

- Define specific elements of reentry to be addressed in the workgroup, incorporate those in the strategic plan, and implement the policies and practices within the strategic plan.
- Learn from experts about best practices to execute and evaluate the implementation of the workgroups' and overarching Illinois Reentry Council's goals. Engage members of the Council and external partners with subject-matter expertise to understand the goals and to implement those aspects which they can impact.
- Collaborate with other workgroups where issues overlap.

### **Years Two and Three of IRC Workgroups**

Goals and objectives of workgroups:

**Economic Opportunity and Upward Mobility** (Co-Chair: Michael Cannon – Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, Matthew McFarland – Lawndale Christian Legal Center)

- 1) Develop regional strategies among Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and Illinois Department of Correction (IDOC) to significantly increase access to training and employment resources.
  - a. Leverage knowledge of DCEO regional managers and IDOC reentry coordinators to codify localized strategies that will include:
    - i. Enrolling local workforce boards and Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) to increase access to staff and resources within IDOC facilities.
    - ii. Assessing potential partners to bring employer-led direct training to IDOC facilities.
    - iii. Identifying potential IDOC facilities and employer partners that are well-positioned to pilot day-release programs (likely limited in scale).
- 2) Educate employers in high-potential industries on employing individuals with records, to build increased interest and commitments.
  - a. Develop a detailed understanding of current employer perspectives on hiring individuals with records, including common misconceptions and concerns.





- b. Codify a detailed “employer messaging toolkit” to build awareness on challenges faced by individuals with records, address common employer hesitations, and inform on incentives / tools available to employers.
  - c. Design and launch targeted campaigns to enroll employers to creating quality, family-sustaining jobs for individuals with records.
- 3) Influence key employers interested in hiring people with records to reform internal hiring and onboarding processes to specifically support the needs of returning individuals.
  - a. Understand in detail the common challenges faced by returning individuals in the job search, application, and onboarding processes.
  - b. Partner with a cohort of committed employers to codify common internal challenges faced by companies when creating specific initiatives for individuals with records, and best practices for improving company processes such that individuals with records can succeed.
  - c. Craft and launch targeted, employer-to-employer, peer campaigns to educate each other and support implementation of best-in-class practices.
- 4) Explore potential for bringing the Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP) to Illinois, so that the prevailing wage for employment during incarceration is improved.
  - a. Develop a comprehensive fact base on PIECP, including perspectives from incarcerated individuals on improving work programs, to inform if advocacy for PIECP should be prioritized in the near-term.
  - b. If PIECP is a prioritized near-term effort, pre-emptively identify employers who would be interested in using PIECP to create roles within DOC facilities.
  - c. Then, craft targeted advocacy campaign to enroll critical private and public stakeholders who are well-positioned to champion PIECP implementation.
- 5) Increase access to relevant asset-based post-secondary education programs inside of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and local jail facilities.
  - a. Engage accredited education institutions (public and private 2-year and 4-year schools, trade schools, etc.), employers, foundations, financial experts (i.e., banks, community development financial institutions, foundations), community-based organizations, families, friends, and services networks to develop workforce and academic programs useful for people who will be exiting jails and prisons.
  - b. Further engage those partners to develop seamless continuation of that programming in communities.
- 6) Support the recommendations of the Higher Education in Prison Task Force and ensure that adult technical and post-secondary education credentials from IDOC and local jail programs are transferable to accredited institutions and recognized by industries.
  - a. Ensure that those institutions are equipped to support the success of people leaving incarceration.
- 7) Support communications and connections between education institutions—especially those operating within prisons and jails—and employers to develop programming that meets interests of currently incarcerated individuals, fosters job placements, and ensures that the material being taught qualifies an individual to work within the related industry or job.
- 8) Support entrepreneurial initiatives and programs, with a focus on those founded or led by individuals with records.
- 9) Support and engage in work being done to provide living wages to those who are incarcerated and have been incarcerated.



- 10) Develop a strategy for effectively utilizing PELL dollars when they become available again in June 2023.
- 11) Catalog current state, county and city spending on reentry employment and education services and supports to assess where additional resources are needed.

**Financing for Reentry** (Co-Chairs: Mark Angelini – Mercy Housing; Michael Goldberg – IFF; Floyd Stafford – Steans Family Foundation)

- 1) Identify and influence the flow of new and existing resources to support effective and promising approaches that help people with records successfully reintegrate into society. Then monitor, track, and evaluate the effectiveness of these resources.
- 2) To support initiatives advanced by the other workgroups, identify, and pursue funding sources by developing a list of promising programs and initiatives that can be replicated or started across Illinois.
  - a. In conjunction with the Housing Workgroup, identify and pursue sources of funding for housing acquisition, rehab, and development (i.e., Real Estate Transfer Tax, R3 Funding, filing fees, etc.) to expand the supply of reentry housing available.
  - b. Assist the General Assembly and Governor in reallocating the savings from consolidating prisons and juvenile facilities to support reentry.
- 3) In the short term, in partnership with the Housing workgroup, influence American Rescue Plan Act spending so it funds the expansion of reentry housing supply with intentional support to organizations that provide services to people with records.
- 4) Explore Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) funding to support the work of the Economic Opportunities and Upward Mobility workgroup.

**Support Services** (Co-Chairs: Delrice Adams – Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority; Orlando Mayorga – Justice, Equity and Opportunity Initiative, Lt. Governor’s Office)

- 1) Create a coordinated network of localized supports and services that is readily accessible to formerly incarcerated individuals and their families whether immediately upon release or later during one’s reentry.
  - a. Collaboratively develop, maintain, and share a database of reentry programs, services, and related information easily available in Illinois that is widely accessible, including programs and services that are available to people, with an emphasis on voluntary services that are reflective of both needs and individuals’ personal goals.
  - b. Build capacity of community-based organizations that support individuals reentering in holistic, trauma-informed, and gender-responsive ways and through a solidarity approach.
  - c. Collaborate with IDOC Northern and Southern Reentry Managers on in-reach and connection to resources before leaving incarceration.
  - d. Engage individuals who have received supports and services as well as organizations which serve individuals reentering to identify and routinely update provided services based on challenges and successes experienced across the state.
    - i. Regionally convene groups of organizations and individuals to foster collaboration in a hub format. This hub format would include a central state-level stakeholder responsible for convening regions throughout Illinois, helping to coordinate their work, and providing any financial and legislative resources needed. These regions would be made up by government, non-



profit, and community-based entities working together to provide supports and services according to the specific needs of each region.

- 2) Strengthen and construct permanent networks of social support for people reentering and their families, emphasizing methods of peer-support such as cohorts of individuals returning to the same community, connected both through community-based organizations or as individuals.
- 3) Prioritize physical and mental health services and social-emotional wellness support that is healing-centered and trauma-informed for individuals reentering.
- 4) Support and expand efforts to remove permanent punishments, monitor the effectiveness of those efforts in reducing the barriers individuals face across housing, employment, and other facets of reentry, and navigate permanent punishments while they exist. Then, use this information to strengthen the network of supports and services.

**Special Considerations Populations** (Co-Chairs: Willette Benford – Office of the Mayor of Chicago; Colette Payne – Women’s Justice Institute; Alyssa Williams – Illinois Department of Corrections)

Members identified the following populations as priorities in addressing special considerations through the development of policies and practices:

- LGBTQIA2S+ & gender-nonconforming individuals;
  - Aging and elderly individuals;
  - Seriously mentally ill and those with substance use disorder and other disabilities;
  - People subject to state banishment laws;
  - Women;
  - Individuals with children/other dependents;
  - Individuals who are undocumented;
  - Veterans;
  - Individuals with various medical conditions; Youth;
  - Emerging adults;
  - Individuals with experience with the child welfare system;
  - People who have served/are serving long and extremely long sentences (20 years+);
  - Survivors of domestic violence; and
  - People listed on public conviction registries
- 1) Collaborate and advise other workgroups to ensure that housing, support services, and economic opportunities are equitably accessible to individuals with special considerations – especially those with high needs – and focus on long-term solutions to the barriers they face. This collaboration will be created by providing guidance to and attending the meetings of the Housing, Support Services, and Economic Opportunity and Upward Mobility workgroups. This workgroup will also work with organizations who have well-rounded understandings of the experiences of people in particular special considerations groups (e.g., the Task Force of Children with Incarcerated Parents and Children’s Best Interest Project).
  - 2) Determine what currently incarcerated individuals' needs, interests, and concerns are prior to their release and integrate their responses in the IRC’s work, especially directed to the appropriate workgroup.
    - a. Develop and distribute a survey within IDOC that captures this feedback from individuals with the identities specifically outlined in each group.



- b. Design educational materials and learning opportunities for Council members and interested external partners centered on characteristics and populations of focus (such as gender-responsive programming, service delivery, etc.). Identify and engage subject matter experts (impacted individuals, organizations, etc.) to co-design and develop such materials and learning opportunities.
- 3) Refine the list of policy and practice changes for each consideration listed and identify prioritization for the workgroup to adhere to.

**Public Agencies' Practices, Policies and Programming** (Co-Chairs: Reality Richard Lovett – READI, Heartland Alliance; Jennifer Parrack – Illinois Department of Corrections; Nneka Jones Tapia – Chicago Beyond)

- 1) Adopt and implement an asset-based and trauma-informed approach (models and practices) to support people entering and exiting prisons and jails that includes staff at facilities.
  - a. Incorporate humanizing, identity-recognizing, and people-centered language.
- 2) Implement policies and practices that prioritize and support people in custody to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships with families, support networks and community-based organizations in the communities to which they will return.
  - a. Identify and adopt policies and practices for visitation, telephone, and family-organized events that are uniform across facilities.
  - b. Develop metrics that allow these policies and practices to be evaluated.
- 3) Reform or eliminate Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR) as conditions of compliance with MSR can create obstacles to securing housing and employment, and to [re-] establishing healthy connections in the community.
  - a. Create a subgroup that regularly reports into the workgroup on discussions, learnings and progress on this recommendation.
- 4) Engage with various state, county, and city departments, boards, and agencies to (1) inform and educate leadership and staff on reentry and current landscape; (2) identify policies, practices, and programs that can be developed or amended to better serve individuals reentering communities; (3) identify gaps and barriers within their services and programming to broaden access; (4) facilitate effective communication and information sharing among departments and agencies. Such departments and agencies include but are not limited to:
  - a. Department on Aging (IDOA):
    - i. Develop educational materials and opportunities for service providers to better understand the context of reentry and experiences of older adults reentering.
  - b. Secretary of State (SOS):
    - i. Monitor, support the implementation of, and assist in developing solutions to barriers of the state ID program that the Secretary of State facilitates in partnership with IDOC.
  - c. Healthcare and Family Services (IDHFS):
    - i. Monitor and support the implementation of Medicaid enrollment within IDOC, Cook County Jail, and other jails.
  - d. Department of Public Health (IDPH):



- i. Address barriers to accessing nursing homes faced by people with records, especially as it relates to finding placements for individuals leaving IDOC under the Joe Coleman Medical Release Act.
  - e. Department of Human Services (IDHS):
    - i. Support and monitor their work with IDOC on enrollment in SNAP, vocational training for people with disabilities, and determining Medicaid eligibility on behalf of IDHFS.
    - ii. Establish a position with responsibilities and authority over reentry in DHS.
  - f. Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR)
    - i. Monitor and support the elimination of barriers to accessing occupational licensing; and identify and eliminate discriminatory practices of insurance and background check companies which create obstacles to employment.
  - g. Prisoner Review Board (PRB)
    - i. Explore whether the Parole Division of IDOC and PRB are playing productive roles in helping individuals secure education and find and maintain employment.
- 5) Monitor and support engagement of public agencies in activities of other workgroups that relate to workgroup topics (Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Housing Development Authority, etc.).
- 6) Support and monitor implementation of the [Joe Coleman Medical Release Act \(JCMR\)](#) across the Prisoner Review Board and IDOC, as well as agencies that can be engaged in implementation, such as IDPH.

**Housing** (Co-Chairs: Gianna Baker – Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance; Richard Rowe – Corporation for Supportive Housing; Alan Zais – Northern Illinois Regional Affordable Community Housing)

- 1) Create a detailed, data-driven view of housing and support needs (*in partnership with Support Services working group*) of individuals preparing to exit incarceration.
  - a. Review and modify the existing Housing Discharge Planning Assessment, to ensure this tool appropriately allows jails and prisons to identify the housing needs of people in custody, prior to release.
  - b. Partner with IDOC to invest in the infrastructure (e.g., tablets, data integration) and people training (both IDOC staff and people preparing to exit) required to successfully drive usage of this tool at scale.
  - c. Build a comprehensive report on the scale of housing needed as well as the types of services required to effectively support individuals exiting incarceration.
- 2) Establish a clear vision and align political support for a housing continuum that will effectively bring the supply of reentry housing and support services to a level that fully addresses the spectrum of housing needs of people with records.
  - a. Outline the housing continuum, including the types of housing and associated services required, as well as a clear rationale for why each type is needed to serve people with records.
  - b. Identify and develop targeted advocacy campaigns towards certain critical stakeholders (public and private) well positioned to champion and support the development of this continuum.
- 3) Influence and incentivize landlords / owners of affordable housing to increase access to people with records.



- a. Develop a detailed understanding of landlords / owners and their current rental practices (e.g., why they don't rent to this population today, what misconceptions exist, which forums can landlords be reached through at scale).
  - b. Codify a "Reentry Housing Messaging Toolkit", which strives to address the most common hesitations and misconceptions they have and builds awareness to the most effective tools and levers (e.g., incentives) available to landlords today.
  - c. Assess the landscape of existing fair housing protections and enforcement; identify mechanisms to expand protections via increased enforcement and / or expanded legislation.
  - d. Assess the effectiveness of existing landlord incentives and develop new incentives that address gaps and are more effective at driving landlord action.
- 4) Influence recipients of government funding (i.e., housing service providers) to remove criteria that are limiting to people impacted by the criminal legal system.
- a. Develop a comprehensive fact base of the various sources of funding for each type of housing along the continuum, including a detailed understanding of funding allocation processes and restrictive criteria, to better understand where there is the greatest opportunity to improve access for people returning from prisons and jails.
  - b. Craft unique, targeted campaigns to advocate for funding that is more inclusive to people returning from prisons and jails, prioritizing those funders controlling the greatest share of housing currently in need.
- 5) Create a detailed "Opportunity Development Playbook" that can guide less experienced individuals (*particularly those who are previously incarcerated themselves*) and service providers in effectively navigating the process of creating / rehabilitating affordable housing.
- a. Gather feedback from those less-experienced developers who have recently gone through the development process, to understand the primary challenges they faced and where additional guidance would have been most helpful.
  - b. Collect and synthesize existing guidance on navigating the development process, from agencies and organizations currently providing similar support to other audiences.
  - c. Develop communication strategies to identify and share the playbook broadly.
- 6) Identify affordable housing properties at highest risk of converting to market-rate and develop tailored strategies to ensure properties remain affordable.
- a. Leverage publicly available data to understand which buildings are soon to be losing their Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) benefits, as these are properties most likely to convert to market-rate.
  - b. Develop additional methodologies to prioritize amongst these buildings (e.g., # of units, average income levels, etc.) and identify a manageable subset of properties to seek to maintain as affordable.
  - c. Develop targeted strategies specific to each property that can support units remaining affordable (e.g., aligning additional financial support, building community advocacy, identifying additional tenants).
- 7) Implement a centralized reentry housing database which captures the existing supply of accessible housing and programmatically supports more efficient matching of returning individuals with landlords who have previously indicated openness to housing people with criminal records.





- d. Understand previous and current efforts to establish a centralized reentry housing database within IL / Chicago, as well as potential partners (e.g., Housing Connector, Google Housing Portal).
  - e. Align on critical requirements of database and identify potential technical partners capable of supporting the development of this technology.
  - f. Enroll groups of landlords interested in participating in such a database, as their buy-in will be critical to maintaining an effective system.
- 8) Monitor the implementation of state and local fair housing reforms (e.g., Cook County Just Housing Ordinance, the reentry housing amendment to the Illinois Human Rights Act) and determine whether additional changes to the text or implementation of these laws are necessary, or whether new laws are necessary.
- 9) In conjunction with the Special Considerations Population workgroup, advocate for reforms to housing banishment laws (restrictions to live 500 feet from a school, park, day care) that apply to individuals on public registries.

## **Conclusion**

This plan is the product of the work of the members of the Illinois Reentry Council and includes their priorities and goals. As the Council members work together over the next several years to implement the priorities outlined here, they may decide to modify them or to delete or add other goals, depending on the evolution of this work. As opportunities arise, the Council will take advantage of them and move swiftly to move certain priorities forward. Some obstacles may be harder than others to overcome. For that reason, the members and staff will remain vigilant and persistent in implementation, waiting for values and circumstances to change in order to find the right times to advance priorities. Progress has already been made in areas listed in the strategic plan and the foundation has been laid for progress for many. The Annual Report in each of the coming years will document the accomplishments and changes needed in the strategic plan. Through this process, the Council envisions the creation of a vibrant, well-funded, accessible, humane and equitable support system for all people who have been incarcerated in Illinois.