



The Advantages of an Intermediary Agency to Youth Reentry

LOCAL REENTRY ORGANIZATIONS FACE
CONSTRAINTS TO PROVIDE
COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES TO JUSTICE-
INVOLVED YOUTH

June 2024

For more information
contact: IWL@fhi360.org

THE ADVANTAGES OF AN INTERMEDIARY AGENCY TO YOUTH REENTRY

Local reentry organizations face constraints to provide comprehensive services to justice-involved youth

There are approximately 25,000 youth in confinement in the United States.¹ Of these, nearly half are held in pretrial detention in local adult jails, and another 20% are held in juvenile facilities that look and function like prisons.²

36,479

“In 2019, there were 36,479 youth in residential placement – 114 for every 100,000 youth in the U.S. population.”

—Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, [2022 National Report](#)

The National Reentry Resource Center points out that youth’s involvement in the juvenile justice system can lead to a number of “collateral consequences” upon reentry, including: hindered access to education, difficulty obtaining a license required for certain professions, disqualification from public benefits, difficulty obtaining housing, and more.³ In addition, many youth are returning to communities where poverty, homelessness, and crime exist. The inability to access fundamental and crucial reentry services puts youth’s physical and mental well-being at risk and can increase the likelihood of recidivism. These barriers also put justice-involved youth at a disadvantage when competing with others for employment opportunities.

To foster a successful transition into the community, youth require comprehensive wraparound support services and assistance navigating the education, justice, and workforce systems. However, reentry organizations, especially in rural areas, are often resource-limited, which limits the services they can provide for returning citizens. Additionally, a lack of coordination among individual service providers and across systems hampers effective tailoring of services and can result in inefficient use of existing resources – and further burden young people with repetitive layers of bureaucracy.⁴ Intermediary agencies such as FHI 360 have the capacity and bird’s eye view to act as a facilitator for comprehensive services, bringing many community stakeholders together to provide youth with a streamlined network of caring adults and supportive navigators.

¹ Prison Policy Initiative. (2024). Mass incarceration: The whole pie. See: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2024.html>

² Ibid.

³ National Reentry Resource Center. (2023). Reentry Spotlight: Understanding and Mitigating the Impacts of Juvenile and Criminal Records. See: https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/reentrySpotlightJuvenileAndCriminalRecords_508.pdf

⁴ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2019). Collaborating for Successful Reentry: A Practical Guide to Support Justice-Involved Young People Returning to the Community. See: <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/cjc-collaboratingforsuccessfulreentry-2019j.pdf>

Intermediary Agencies Optimize Local Efforts

Research shows that one promising solution to providing comprehensive support is the use of an **intermediary agency**. The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center found that an “integrated approach” to the use of available resources across criminal justice and workforce development systems improves employability and reduces recidivism.⁵ Linking individuals who have been involved with the corrections system to jobs has been shown to reduce the astounding costs to taxpayers for reincarceration. It also results in safer communities. Studies have shown that when people are working, they are spending their time in constructive ways and developing prosocial behaviors. As a result, they are then less likely to engage in crime and illegal behavior.⁶

In its Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies Pilot Project, CSG examined strategies for integrating programming across corrections, reentry and workforce development agencies. It identified that the use of a “lead coordinating agency” or **intermediary** can promote collaboration among agencies and serve in identifying existing services across the community.⁷ The study defined specific key roles for intermediary agencies including evaluating community-based reentry programs, coordinating transition planning, and tracking referrals and services. Because of the intermediary’s understanding of the various providers and their services, it can **develop partnerships** and methods to better match people to services. An evaluation of the Pilot Project suggested that the pilot sites were generally successful in ensuring the use of resource-allocation and service-matching tools in their reentry programs.⁸

Key partnerships can include the young people themselves, small and large employers, school districts and institutions of higher education, law enforcement agencies, child support agencies, housing and transportation organizations, mental health professionals, legal aid and advocacy organizations, community partners that offer support services, religious institutions, banking and financial institutions, childcare organizations, policymakers, and more.⁹

⁵ The Council of State Governments Justice Center and The National Reentry Resource Center. (2017). The Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies Pilot Project: Four questions communities should consider when implementing a collaborative approach. See:

https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/IRES-Four-Questions_April-2017.pdf

⁶ Duran, L., Plotkin, M., Potter, P. & and Rosen, H. (2013). Reintegrated reentry and employment strategies: Reducing recidivism and promoting job readiness. The Council of State Governments Justice Center. See: <https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/Publications/CSG-Reentry-and-Employment.pdf>

⁷ The Council of State Governments Justice Center and The National Reentry Resource Center. (2017).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bird, K., Dawkins, C. & Johnson, L. (2020). Surviving to thriving: Supporting transformation, reentry, and connections to employment for young adults. CLASP and FHI 360: Washington, DC. See: <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-crc-surviving-thriving.pdf>

FHI 360's IWL is an experienced intermediary agency that supports organizations in connecting youth to education and employment

FHI 360's Institute for Work and Learning (IWL) is a leader in serving as an intermediary agency on reentry projects. The IWL reentry model incorporates supportive program infrastructure; formalizes partnerships among corrections staff, community-based education providers, and workforce training providers; reflects human-centered and trauma-informed approaches; and incorporates positive youth development and adult education principles. We research in-demand skills and occupations to optimize work and learning opportunities for people returning to their communities.

70%

Impressive Results

Since 2017, 70% of program participants are placed in a long-term education program, apprenticeship, or employment. The program also measures recidivism, which is under 4% by DOL standards.

Serving as the intermediary agency, IWL leads the [Compass Rose Collaborative](#)—a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) program⁹ supporting young adults ages 18-24 who have been impacted by the justice system. Our skill lies in supporting organizations that connect youth to education, skills training and employment.

IWL oversees multisite implementation of the Compass Rose Collaborative in 10 geographic locations across dense urban and sparse rural areas. We provide a suite of tools and resources to ensure our local partners' success: **peer learning and exchange opportunities** with other communities; an **inventory of assets** of each site; **resources** to share; development and enhancement of **partnerships; training and technical assistance opportunities, and meeting facilitation**. Our well-established organizational processes provide a strong and ethical financial structure through which we ensure accurate and appropriate funding and reporting. We also provide training on these systems and processes for our partner organization.

IWL uses a **common data management system** to track program outcomes and long-term impact. IWL validates data, assesses programs against our standardized set of data and outcomes, creates dashboards and **data visualization resources** for partners to promote a **data culture** and enable data-driven decision-making.

Conclusion

By collaborating with an intermediary agency, funders strengthen the capacity of community stakeholders, secure resources to support and sustain reentry programs, document and collect effective practices to share with the field, and amplify collaboration across systems. We ask that reentry stakeholders [JOIN US](#) in breaking down barriers to reentry by partnering with an intermediary agency and implementing comprehensive strategies that **support returning citizens** and promote effective reentry programs.

¹⁰ The Compass Rose Collaborative is 100% funded by the Department of Labor in the amount of \$4.5M (GO 2022) and \$5.1M (GO 2024). No other sources of funding support the project.