

The Advantages of an Intermediary Agency to Youth Reentry

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

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

National Institute for Work and Learning
at NIWL@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 52,000 youth in confinement in the United States.¹ Of these, a significant number are held in adult jails or prisons, and most of the rest are locked in juvenile facilities that look and function like prisons.²

The Juvenile Justice Information Exchange 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 school, difficulty obtaining a license required for certain professions, disqualification from public benefits or food stamps, 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 youth impacted by the justice system at a disadvantage when competing with others for employment opportunities.

To foster a successful transition into the community, youth require wraparound supportive services and assistance navigating the education, justice, and workforce systems. There are few organizations at the local level that are prepared to act as a broker for comprehensive services and provide youth with a caring adult and navigator. Typically, reentry organizations are financially strapped and struggle to find resources and services for returning citizens. Further, the lack of coordination among individual service providers and agencies hampers effective tailoring of services and can result in inefficient deployment of funders' resources.⁴

Comprehensive services are best provided by an intermediary agency

Research supports FHI 360's National Institute for Work and Learning's (NIWL) belief that one promising solution to providing comprehensive support is the use of an **intermediary agency**. The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center found in a study that an "integrated approach" to the use of available resources across criminal justice and workforce development systems improves employability

21%

"While young people ages 18–21 make up 10 percent of the U.S. population, the comprise 21 percent of people admitted into adult prison every year."

—Alex Frank,
[Vera Institute of Justice, 2017](#)

¹ Prison Policy Initiative. (2020). Mass incarceration: The whole pie. See: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2020.html>

² Ibid.

³ Juvenile Justice Information Exchange. (2015). Re-entry: Key issues. See: <https://jije.org/hub/reentry/key-issues/>

⁴ Ibid.

and reduces recidivism.⁵ Linking individuals who have been involved with the corrections system to jobs has been proven to reduce the astounding costs to taxpayers for reincarceration. It also results in safer communities. Studies have proven 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 serve to **develop partnerships** and methods to better match people to services.

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 supportive services, banking and financial institutions, childcare organizations and policymakers.⁸

FHI 360’S NIWL IS AN EXPERIENCED INTERMEDIARY AGENCY THAT SUPPORTS ORGANIZATIONS IN CONNECTING YOUTH TO EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

NIWL is a leader in serving as an intermediary agency on reentry projects. The NIWL reentry model incorporates supportive program

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). 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

⁸ 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>

infrastructure and formalizes partnerships among corrections systems and community-based education providers, 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.

Serving as the intermediary agency, NIWL leads the [Compass Rose Collaborative](#)—a Department of Labor (DOL) program⁹ supporting young adults ages 18-24 that have been impacted by the justice system. Our skill lies in supporting organizations that connect youth to education, skills training and employment. The program’s Young Adult Leadership Council members, who are current beneficiaries of the program, serve as partners to provide essential program feedback.

IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

Since 2017 over

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.

NIWL oversees multisite implementation of the Compass Rose Collaborative in ten 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 organizations.

NIWL uses a **common data management system** to track program outcomes and long-term impact. NIWL 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 build 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.

⁹ The Compass Rose Collaborative is 100% funded by the Department of Labor in the amount of \$4.5M. No other sources of funding support the project.