

Funding for Criminal Justice and Offender Reentry Programs and Services

The Foundation's grants within criminal justice and offender reentry meet a range of funding needs. Several of the Foundation's grants fund an entire initiative; some supplement existing funding to increase the populations served or provide important additional services; others address funding gaps until new resources can be identified or the efficacy of the initiative can be determined. The Foundation's specialists work with government and community partners in developing these initiatives. They also identify other financial resources and provide technical assistance to apply for these funding opportunities. The Foundation's selections are guided by a vision shared with its government and community partners—to work together to provide a holistic array of coordinated services in order to reduce their cost and increase their effectiveness, thereby reducing recidivism, strengthening families, improving neighborhoods, and enhancing public safety.

For more information on select programs, click on the program title below.

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Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation

America Works

America Works of New York, Inc. offers employment preparation, job placement, and retention services for Newark’s offenders on probation. They also provide transportation, job coaching, and conflict resolution training. America Works has an agreement with Essex County Probation to refer probationers for help in securing employment. The program is located at [Opportunity Reconnect](#), the one-stop reentry center at Essex County College.

America Works is funded through a performance-based contract—the agency is not paid unless offenders obtain and retain jobs for specific time periods. The program’s goal is to place 100 probationers in jobs and to help them remain employed for at least 90 days. The results of this program will help determine if job placement and retention services can be improved through performance contracting.

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<p>Computer-Based Learning from Prison to Community</p>	<p>Computer-Based Learning from Prison to Community provides female inmates with employment-focused instruction that starts in prison and can continue when they return home. While incarcerated, the women learn to use computer-assisted technology in supervised classrooms at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, Bo Robinson Assessment Center, and Kintock Halfway House. When the women are released from these institutions, they will be able to resume their education at home with computers and distance learning provided by New Jersey Workforce Development One-Stop Centers, which also offer job placement assistance. The program serves more than 200 women each year.</p> <p>The Computer-Based Learning from Prison to Community program is operated by a partnership of government and private organizations including Essex County College; Rutgers Center for Women and Work; Write – NJ; Business Access, Inc.; local Workforce Investment Boards; the New Jersey Departments of Corrections and Labor; and the State Parole Board.</p>
<p>Essex County Welfare Eligibility Workers</p>	<p>Two Essex County welfare eligibility workers assist prisoners in completing the welfare application process prior to release. This ensures that a safety net of services and income is available immediately upon the offender’s return to Essex County. The eligibility workers expedite linkages for needed services with a focus on substance abuse treatment, housing, family support, job training, and placement. Due to the program’s success, Essex County has assumed funding for the eligibility workers, who are now out-stationed at Opportunity Reconnect, Essex County’s one-stop reentry center.</p>
<p>FORGE (Female Offender Resource Group of Essex)</p>	<p>FORGE provides case management to Essex County female ex-offenders to facilitate their successful transition from prison to home. The program helps them reunite with their families, effectively reintegrate into their neighborhoods, and attain their highest level of self-sufficiency. FORGE’s resource specialists have access to a network of collaborating community providers that provide employment, housing, healthcare, family intervention, and related social and educational services. FORGE is a partnership of the New Jersey State Parole Board, the Wise Women Center, and The Nicholson Foundation. It is based at the Wise Women Center at Essex County College and is integrated into Opportunity Reconnect, the one-stop reentry services center. FORGE is serving more than 500 women a year and has had a positive impact on recidivism rates.</p>

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Greater Newark Safer Cities Initiative	<p>The Greater Newark Safer Cities Initiative (GNSCI) targets serious and violent offenders to reduce recidivism and prevent parole violations, especially those that lead to reincarceration. A caseworker, hired through Community Agencies Corporation of New Jersey (CAC-NJ), works closely with parole officers to develop and implement individualized reentry plans with violent parolees. Services and referrals are provided for substance abuse treatment, mental health, public assistance, job skills training, employment, parenting classes, and anger management.</p> <p>GNSCI is a collaboration of CAC-NJ, Essex County’s local law enforcement agencies, and State criminal justice agencies including prosecutors, public defenders, courts, the New Jersey State Parole Board, and Rutgers Police Institute.</p>
Legal Services of New Jersey—Prisoner Reentry Project	<p>The Prisoner Reentry Project (PREP) provides free legal assistance on civil matters to ex-offenders to ease their transition from prison to home. A part-time attorney and a full-time paralegal are located at Opportunity Reconnect, Essex County’s reentry center. PREP provides initial legal counsel on a wide range of issues that affect returning offenders, such as modification of child support orders, consumer debt, credit reporting, debt collections, denial of employment licenses, evictions, and expungements. The program also makes referrals for more extensive legal representation including to attorneys who will represent ex-offenders on a pro bono basis. PREP is operated by Legal Services of New Jersey.</p>
License Reinstatement Program	<p>The License Reinstatement Program helps ex-offenders overcome obstacles to reinstating driver’s licenses that expire during prison terms, are forfeited as part of sentencing, or are suspended due to failure to pay fines and fees. Having a valid driver’s license improves an ex-offender’s chances of obtaining employment, which is a key element to successful reentry. The License Reinstatement Program was conceived and is operated by the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. The Nicholson Foundation shared the funding of the pilot.</p> <p>As part of this initiative, the Superior Court of New Jersey, Essex Vicinage, hired a mediator to work with ex-offenders. The mediator increased ex-offenders’ compliance with agreements to pay outstanding traffic violation fines, which resulted in reinstatement of their licenses. Because of the success of this program, the Superior Court has assumed funding for the mediator position and New Jersey has passed legislation to implement the program statewide.</p>

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<p>Loaned Executive for the City of Newark Reentry Programs</p>	<p>A loaned executive works in Newark as an integral member of Mayor Cory Booker’s administration. The goal is to assist Newark in improving its reentry initiatives, which can help lower crime rates, stabilize neighborhoods, and reduce the cost of recidivism. The loaned executive integrates best practices into the City’s reentry programs such as measuring performance outcomes of reentry service vendors; developing strategic plans for implementing new initiatives and strengthening existing services; recommending legislative and regulatory changes; and coordinating with community-based and philanthropic organizations working to revitalize Newark.</p>
<p>New Careers Project (CEO Model™)</p>	<p>The New Careers Project, founded by the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, is an employment program serving Newark’s returning offenders that replicates the model developed by the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO Model™). The goals are full-time, unsubsidized jobs within four months of enrollment, sustained employment for at least ten months, and no criminal activity for at least one year. To attain these goals, New Careers provides immediate transitional paid employment as soon as possible after offenders are released from prison. Transitional employment was provided initially through the First Occupational Center of New Jersey and subsequently by the City of Newark. While ex-offenders are working at their short-term subsidized jobs, the program provides case management, employment readiness, life skills training, job placement, and retention services. New Careers serves over 100 returning offenders each year and has been able to increase the scale of the program with support from The Nicholson Foundation.</p>
<p>New Jersey Department of Corrections—Children of Prisoners Mentoring Identification Program</p>	<p>The New Jersey Department of Corrections (DOC) Children of Prisoners Mentoring Identification Program helps locate mentors for children of women incarcerated in the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women. The aim of the program is to minimize the negative impact on the children of their mothers’ incarceration by connecting the children to supportive adult role models in the community. A DOC social worker works with all incoming inmates to determine if they have children between 4 and 18 years old who could benefit from mentoring. Information about the children whose mothers express interest is given to the Northwest Community Action Program’s RSVP Volunteer Resource Center, which coordinates the mentoring services.</p>

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation	
<p>New Jersey Department of Corrections— Disability and Medical Benefits Early Application Processing Program</p>	<p>The New Jersey Department of Corrections Disability and Medical Benefits Early Application Processing Program enhances discharge and reentry planning for inmates with special needs by improving their access to government income supports and medical services upon release. The program identifies prisoners who are veterans, elderly, or disabled. Social workers assess their potential eligibility for food stamps, Veterans Administration (VA) benefits, and Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI). They help inmates apply for these benefits six months before release and assist them in responding to related requests from the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the VA. Prior to their release, inmates are connected with community agencies to support their successful transition to the community.</p> <p>The program has agreements with the VA and the SSA to process inmates' applications for benefits prior to their release. The SSA uses a telephone interview with inmates to facilitate this process.</p>
<p>New Jersey State Parole Board— Enhanced Resource Development and Housing Services Project</p>	<p>The New Jersey State Parole Board's Enhanced Resource Development and Housing Services Project identifies and obtains additional funding for parolee program services. A grants manager, working within the Board's Fiscal and Administrative Division, responds to proposals and develops linkages with government agencies and philanthropic organizations to enhance programs that address parolees' complex and multiple needs. A dedicated case manager in their Community Services Division improves linkages to housing and mental health treatment. Also see New Jersey State Parole Board—Housing Coordination Program.</p>
<p>New Jersey State Parole Board— Housing Coordination Program</p>	<p>The objective of the New Jersey State Parole Board's Housing Coordination Program is to address the significant housing needs of offenders who are leaving prison and returning home without a stable place to live. A Parole Board housing coordinator works with local parole offices and community stakeholders to identify affordable temporary, intermediate, and long-term housing options for parolees. To accomplish this, the coordinator develops collaborative partnerships with community and faith-based housing providers, State and local government agencies, public housing authorities, and other concerned organizations.</p> <p>Also see New Jersey State Parole Board—Enhanced Resource Development and Housing Services Project.</p>

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<p>New Jersey State Parole Board Researcher</p>	<p>The New Jersey State Parole Board researcher obtains objective information about the Parole Board’s reentry initiatives and evaluates their effectiveness. The researcher is responsible for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing and maintaining a database for the Parole Board to support reentry initiatives; • tracking and reporting outcomes of the Board’s Community Programs Division’s facilities and populations; • evaluating the evidenced-based programs initiated by the Parole Board; • evaluating Opportunity Reconnect, FORGE, Next Step, and other Nicholson Foundation funded reentry initiatives.
<p>New Life New Beginnings</p>	<p>New Life New Beginnings provides mentoring to offenders who are receptive to faith-based services and have volunteered for the program. In collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Corrections and the State Parole Board, mentors work with offenders to develop and implement effective discharge and reentry plans. The mentors work with program participants during and after incarceration, which facilitates continuity of mentoring and long-term reentry support. Churches in Cooperation, Inc., a network of faith-based organizations, operates New Life New Beginnings. To provide the highest quality services, Passaic County Community College provides formal training for mentors.</p>
<p>Next Step Program</p>	<p>The Next Step program offers inmates who are housed in New Jersey State halfway houses the opportunity to enroll in Essex County College. In addition to college courses, job training, and other educational opportunities, offenders receive case management and have access to other services such as recovery groups, advocacy services, and academic and personal counseling. The Next Step program eases the offenders’ transition to the community through their involvement in education and employment-related activities. Each year approximately 50 men and women enroll in the program; many make the honor roll, graduate, and become employed. Next Step is operated by Essex County College in cooperation with the New Jersey State Parole Board and the Department of Corrections. The Next Step program is being replicated by Union County College.</p>

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Opportunity Reconnect

Opportunity Reconnect is a one-stop reentry center for offenders returning from prison to Essex County. In a single location at Essex County College, returnees are able to access all the programs and services available in the County to help them become productive, law-abiding citizens. Case managers assist participants in navigating and successfully connecting to complex service delivery systems, such as welfare, Medicaid, education, training, employment, housing, substance abuse treatment, health and mental health services, family reunification, and mentoring. Many of these services are represented on-site. Case managers also coordinate with probation and parole officers to support participants’ reentry plans. The program serves 60-100 returnees weekly.

Essex County College functions as the lead case management agency for processing, assessing, referring, monitoring, and tracking participants as they implement their reentry plans.

Opportunity Reconnect is overseen by a steering committee of its partners—the City of Newark, Essex County College, Essex County Probation, the New Jersey State Department of Corrections, the State Parole Board, Essex County Citizen Services, and The Nicholson Foundation. Representatives of community and faith-based agencies serve on Opportunity Reconnect’s Community Steering Committee.

PACT (Parole Accountability Conference Team)

PACT provides enhanced support services and develops special panels to assist Newark’s parolees in complying with their parole requirements. A licensed clinical social worker and a certified alcohol and drug counselor collaborate with State Parole Board supervision staff to provide parolees with case management and referrals for needed services. They match offenders to the appropriate substance abuse treatment programs and provide on-site clinical resources for supervising officers. They are also assessing the feasibility of the Reentry Drug Court Model to improve compliance with parole conditions. In addition, these clinicians participate in Board Review panels to discuss the progress of individual parolees and recommend alternatives to incarceration (e.g., treatment) that can reduce the instances of parole revocation due to technical violations.

Programs Receiving Grants from The Nicholson Foundation	
PRI (Prisoner Reentry Initiative) — Expansion for Violent Offenders	<p>The federally funded PRI, operated by Goodwill Industries, is expanded by this program in order to serve violent offenders, who cannot be served under the federal grant. Goodwill collaborates with the New Jersey Department of Corrections (DOC), the State Parole Board, and Opportunity Reconnect to coordinate services for 100 violent offenders per year returning to Essex County on parole from State prisons. This coordinated effort for male and female violent offenders includes discharge planning, needs assessments, development of individual employability plans, job placement, and post employment retention services. The PRI programs are integrated into Opportunity Reconnect, Essex County’s one-stop reentry center.</p> <p>The DOC’s Office of Transitional Services was able to enhance their role in the PRI Expansion by hiring a social worker who identifies eligible violent prisoners prior to their release, refers them to this program, and collaborates with Goodwill to coordinate post-release services.</p>
Resource Guide for Funding Reentry Employment Programs for Returning Offenders	<p><i>DOLLARS AND SENSE—A RESOURCE GUIDE: Funding Reentry Employment Programs for Returning Offenders</i> is a policy paper developed in 2006 by The Nicholson Foundation. The Foundation’s objective was to share funding strategies, lessons learned, and best practices with organizations interested in offender reentry programs. The <i>Resource Guide</i> also helps local and state governments, as well as other stakeholders, to learn about potential funding resources to support offender reentry programs.</p> <p>Click here to access this resource guide.</p>
ROIS (Recovery Oriented Integrated System)	<p>ROIS is a prison-to-community drug abuse treatment model that is working to provide a consistent treatment approach in whichever setting an individual receives treatment. It also measures treatment outcomes as participants transition from prison treatment programs to halfway houses and then to treatment in the community. ROIS is a joint program of the New Jersey Department of Corrections, Rutgers University Behavior Science Program, and Integrity House, a community-based treatment provider. The program serves 25 individuals per year and will be expanding its capacity.</p> <p>The Nicholson Foundation participated in developing the program and funds the reentry caseworker who links participants from prison treatment programs to Integrity House’s treatment programs in the community.</p>

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RSVP Volunteer Resource Center— Mentoring Children of Incarcerated Parents Program	<p>The Northwest Community Action Program’s RSVP Volunteer Resource Center coordinates mentoring for the children of women incarcerated in the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women. The forced separation of these children from their mothers makes them especially susceptible to high-risk behaviors. The program aims to reduce this risk by matching these children with trained mentors who can provide support and a stable relationship.</p> <p>A DOC social worker provides a list of children whose incarcerated mothers would like to have their children mentored. RSVP follows-up with the guardians/caregivers to determine their willingness to have the child in their care obtain mentoring services. RSVP provides those who are interested with information about local New Jersey State certified mentoring programs and assists the caregiver in making a selection.</p> <p>There is an initiative underway to have all New Jersey certified mentoring programs become an approved Caregiver’s Choice program. This federally sponsored program provides vouchers worth \$1,000 to the guardians/caregivers that they can give to certified mentoring organizations to purchase once-a-week mentoring for one year for the child in their care.</p>
Union County College Offender Reentry Initiative	<p>The Union County College Offender Reentry Initiative is planning to develop comprehensive reentry programming for the 500 parolees required to participate in Union County’s Day Reporting Centers each year. The goal is to replicate Opportunity Reconnect, Essex County College’s successful one-stop reentry center. Union County College (UCC) is the lead agency coordinating this effort with Union County, New Jersey Department of Corrections, the State Parole Board, The Nicholson Foundation, and other stakeholders. Representatives of the State Parole Board and Union County’s Human Services Department and Workforce Board participate in UCC planning and are represented on the Union County Reentry Steering Committee.</p>