

Criminal Justice: Reentry

Report highlights

July 2023

Limited capacity, unknown program effects, and insufficient metrics impede reentry success in Idaho.

The Department of Correction plays a critical role in preparing people for reentry, supervising clients in the community, and connecting clients to resources. However, the department cannot be the sole reentry support for people returning to the community.

58% of parole staff reported that there are not enough parole officers.

\$5,605 was the average account balance of residents in **reentry centers** who worked in the community.

\$58 was the average account balance of residents in **prison facilities** who worked for the department.

Only **2** of the department's **5** core behavioral intervention programs have been rated for effectiveness by the National Institute of Justice.

37% of people with term felony sentences released in 2018 were back in prison within three years.



Recommendations

The department should implement pre- and post-program testing and participant satisfaction surveys to learn more about the effectiveness of their programs.

The department should develop additional metrics of reentry success that capture the key domains of successful reintegration identified by the National Academies of Sciences.

Limited capacity hampers the department's reentry efforts.

Correction officer staffing shortages have led residents to experience limited access to programs and opportunities designed to prepare them for reentry.

Staff and residents reported that there are not enough reentry center beds.

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[The reentry center] gave me self-confidence, it gave me self-worth, it gave me role models to look up to.

- Former reentry center resident

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[Reentry centers] are about giving inmates returning to the community jobs and skills—the tools needed for the best possible chance of success and, ultimately, keeping our communities as safe as possible.

- Brad Little, Governor

More information is needed to understand program impacts.

Behavioral intervention programs are designed to achieve an ambitious and complex outcome—a change in human behavior. Progress towards that goal requires sustained measurement, learning, and adjustment. The department's program effectiveness reports are inconclusive.

Former participants described the programs as repetitive and as hoops they had to jump through to be eligible for parole.

Current metrics are insufficient for informing good policy decisions.

Recidivism, the return to criminal behavior, does not indicate why reentry efforts are unsuccessful. Recidivism is an insufficient measure of individual and department success.

Expanded metrics of reentry success should examine individual well-being across multiple domains.

View the report:
www.legislature.idaho.gov/opec/

