



The Cabinet-level Reentry Council is working to enhance community safety and well-being, assist those returning from prison and jail in becoming productive citizens, and save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration.

Overview

Each year, more than 600,000 individuals are released from state and federal prisons. Another 11.4 million cycle through local jails. When reentry fails, the costs—both societal and economic—are high. More than two-thirds of state prisoners are rearrested within three years of their release; half are reincarcerated. High rates of recidivism mean more crime, more victims, and more pressure on an already overburdened criminal justice system. The United States now spends about \$80 billion annually on federal, state, and local corrections.

Our Mission

The Federal Interagency Reentry Council is comprised of more than 20 federal agencies, working to:

- *make communities safer by reducing recidivism and victimization;*
- *assist people who return from prison and jail to become productive citizens; and*
- *save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration.*

Chaired by the Attorney General and the Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, the Reentry Council represents a significant executive branch commitment

to coordinating reentry efforts and advancing effective reentry policies.

Since 2011, the Reentry Council has worked to address the breadth of issues related to reentry and improve outcomes for formerly incarcerated individuals, their families and communities. Reentry Council agencies have taken concrete steps to remove federal barriers to successful reentry, so that returning individuals—who have served their time and paid their debts to society—are able to compete for a job, attain stable housing, support their children and families, and contribute to their communities.

Reentry Council Agencies

Department of Agriculture
Department of Commerce
Department of Education
Department of Energy
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Homeland Security
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of the Interior
Department of Justice
Department of Labor
Department of Transportation
Department of the Treasury
Department of Veterans Affairs
Council of Economic Advisors
Office of Management and Budget

Office of National Drug Control Policy
Office of Personnel Management
Small Business Administration
White House Domestic Policy Council
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency
Corporation for National & Community Service
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Federal Communications Commission
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
Federal Trade Commission
U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
Internal Revenue Service
Social Security Administration
White House Office of Faith-Based & Neighborhood Partnerships

Our Work

Key achievements include:

- **Reducing barriers to meaningful employment opportunities.** Many employers have policies that immediately disqualify any applicant with a criminal record regardless of the nature of the offense, the time elapsed, or other mitigating circumstances. To address this issue, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued [guidance](#) on the use of arrest and conviction records in employment decisions and the Small Business Administration expanded its [Microloan eligibility](#) rules. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) modified the hiring process for most federal jobs through its “Ban the Box” rule, which delays inquiries into criminal history until after a conditional employment offer has been made. And the White House launched the [Fair Chance Business Pledge](#) to engage employers from multiple sectors, garnering commitment from major employers such as Coca-Cola, Facebook, Google, Hersheys, Microsoft, Starbucks and Walmart.
- **Expanding access to educational opportunities.** The Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) released [joint guidance](#) and expanded [resources](#) on correctional education. ED also launched the [Second Chance Pell pilot](#) program to expand access to Pell Grants for nearly 12,000 eligible incarcerated students, allowing these individuals to pursue post-secondary education to improve employment outcomes upon release. In partnership with the White House, ED launched the [Fair Chance Higher Education Pledge](#) to encourage postsecondary institutions to adopt admissions policies that consider criminal history information within the appropriate context to reduce barriers to college access.
- **Reducing barriers to stable and affordable housing.** To increase housing stability for justice-involved individuals, the Department of Housing and Urban and Development (HUD) issued [guidance](#) to clarify that arrest records may not be used to determine who can live in HUD-assisted properties. Building on this guidance, HUD issued [fair housing guidance](#) on the treatment of renters and buyers with criminal records, and landlords’ and sellers’ obligations under the Fair Housing Act. The historic guidance explains that blanket bans on renting or selling to anyone with a criminal record may have an unjustified discriminatory effect or disparate impact in violation of the Fair Housing Act.
- **Improved access to health care and benefits.** To strengthen health outcomes, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released [guidance](#) to address access to private health insurance through the Health Insurance Marketplace. HHS also issued [guidance](#) that helps facilitate access to Medicaid services upon release from incarceration. And the Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed a waiver to allow states to enroll inmates in nutritional assistance programs prior to release, helping to ensure food security upon reentry.
- **Promoting public education on reentry issues.** The Reentry Council is committed to using the bully pulpit to inform public discourse and reduce the stigma around justice-involvement. The Council has released more than two dozen [Reentry MythBusters](#) on a range of topics to debunk misconceptions around federal policies that affect formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. The Council has also raised awareness of key reentry issues by supporting events such as [National Reentry Week](#), a DOJ-sponsored initiative that included over 550 events nationwide aimed at improving outcomes for reentering individuals.

For more information, please visit the Reentry Council website:

<http://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/projects/firc/>