

Reentry Information
United States Probation & Pretrial Office
Southern District of Mississippi
August 2013



A. When Does Reentry Begin

Reentry defined: Reentry is a process of change or starting over. It has a beginning point but is a process toward a successful, rewarding, crime free lifestyle. We all continue to change and hopefully move forward and progress towards our goals. When and where does Reentry begin? You are at the turning point right now to make choices that can affect your future. Reentry begins now and begins with you.

This presentation, we hope, will encourage you and show you some things you can do now and prior to release that will set the stage for the rest of your life.

B. What is Your Role in Reentry

Change begins with you. You are the expert on you. I firmly believe that everyone is capable of change. The question is, "are you happy with where you are now?" Can you look back and determine what happened and what needs to change. If you can, this is a starting point for you. Do not look at your sentence as an end but as a means to get back up and run the race that you have already started.

Your role is to engage the process, take advantage of programming opportunities and be responsible for securing resources prior to release to promote and support self-sufficiency. **LEARN HOW TO MAKE THE SYSTEM WORK FOR YOU!**

C. What are the two main reasons why offenders return to prison or Recidivate

1) THINKING: Our thinking sets us up for success or failure. Some of it (thinking) is so entrenched that it is almost automatic. Can anyone give me an example of a thinking error or criminal thinking? A thinking error could be as simple as, "I'm tired, so what if I would have the work done on my shift, I will let someone else do it" or "I would not be here if not for that attorney or informant." Thinking errors shift the blame and creates excuses in order to avoid responsible behavior and action.

How would you change your thinking or self-talk? In order to change your thinking you must take responsibility for your actions and realize that changing your thinking can be challenging. The Bureau of Prisons has numerous programs to assist you with this change. It is also important to realize that our thinking or self-talk determines our success and the course for our lives. Our thinking and self-talk messages affect all aspects of our lives.

2) PEERS: We are who we associate with for the good and also for the bad. Never make someone a priority for you when you are only an option for them. You can't blame everything on your peers as you made the choice to associate with them. How do you change your peers? You change your peers by taking a true look at yourself and those you associate with. You must select those that will support your efforts to remain crime free. Further, the right peers will assist you in climbing the ladder of success and support your freedom and good choices. Can you still associate with those that are using drugs, breaking the rules, or continue criminal conduct? No.

Are your peers negative or positive? We are who we associate with. Negative peers normally will gravitate towards negative peers. Positive peers and successful people will have an intolerance for negative acting and thinking people. What do your current peers say about you? Are you negative or positive?

D. Developing Program Goals

Short Term: Short term goals are goals or objectives that are easy to accomplish within several weeks to a month. An example is, "I will talk to my counselor today about enrolling in the GED program". "I will send a letter to the most positive person that I know to request assistance in locating a positive mentor". "I will identify all of my skills". "I will ask my counselor about programing to assist me in changing my thinking or peers." " I need to find someone to assist me in making better choices."

Long Term: Long term goals may take a little longer to reach and could consist of a combination of short term goals. An example is, "Within two years I will have my GED". "My goal over the next two years is to complete a vocational training course in welding."

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S.M.A.R.T. GOALS: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely - The BOP uses the **Inmate Skills Development System (ISDS)** to assess skill deficits and also to track progress on a continual basis. **USE THE PROCESS! DON'T JUST RUSH OVER YOUR GOALS AND PROGRESS! INVEST IN YOURSELF NOW!!!!**

The probation officer will review the ISDS and will look at your goals and progress toward completion of those goals in order to determine your readiness to face future goals, readiness to work, or seek further training opportunities.

Who is responsible for developing and working your plan? You are!

No one is going to do it for you! You have to act like you want it and be motivated. Does the BOP force you to participate? No. How will your failure to program affect your supervision and success in the future? Your failure to program and seek out services could drastically affect your future. Success is future focused and driven. Don't waste your time in BOP custody. If you have a need for programming, it needs to be done now. The USPO will be expecting progress.

Example: A 23 year old offender that has just completed a 4 year sentence and has arrived at the federal halfway house. This offender has special conditions to obtain his GED and also to take vocational skills courses upon release. He did not get his GED while in the Bureau of Prisons and acted as if he was not aware of the special conditions of supervision. Essentially he wasted four years. Upon release the focus of his supervision will be getting his GED in order to comply with the special condition of supervision.

E. GED/Education/VT/Apprenticeships

Why is a GED and Education so important?

Each year of education adds about \$10,000/year to an individual's potential income.

A high school graduate on average earns \$260,000 more over a life time than a drop out.

Unemployment rates for individuals with a four year degree is 4.9 %; Some college is 8.3 %; High school graduates with no college is 10.6%; and those with less than a high school diploma at 14.7%; Offenders who attempt to earn a GED or take post-secondary course work while in prison have lower rates of recidivism. More jobs are demanding post-secondary education degrees and certificates. Your participation in programming will help you after release and will increase your opportunities for employment and increase the potential for higher wages in the future.

START NOW: Make sure that you keep track of your progress and maintain your certificates! Who has your certificates now? I hope you do. Start a release or employment readiness file or folder immediately. What will you keep in it?

Resume! Certificates! Transcripts! Employment References!

F. RDAP/Mental Health Treatment

Did the Court or Probation Office identify a need for substance abuse treatment or is there a special condition for substance abuse treatment? If there is, you better try very hard to get into the RDAP program. It is voluntary! It does not matter if you get the time off? It is one of the best programs that the BOP offers. However, just attending will not get you the maximum benefit! Apply it to your life! How can this impact your future? Example: Substance abuse or addiction issue can affect every aspect of your life. You may be able to remain drug free while in the institution, however, bad choices, associations, and thinking errors are numerous and very difficult to change. If addiction was a problem prior to your incarceration, it will be addressed once released by your supervision officer if not dealt with by the RDAP program.

The best way to prepare is to participate in the RDAP program. This may very well save your life and prove to be one of the smartest and best choices you can make.

G. Employment WOTC

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit? Employers can get a tax credit of up to \$2,400 and if you are a veteran, the credit can be even more. The State Department of Labor Office can provide additional information and the required forms.

Federal Bonding Program: This is a fidelity bond insurance coverage that is offered free of charge. Covers high monetary risk individuals who meet a specific criteria. Should a theft or loss of property occur, the employer would be paid. The Federal Bonding Program is administered by the State Department of Labor Offices.

WIA: Work Force Investment Act. The WIA funds programming for individuals who are hard to place in employment or the individual has lost a job and now needs additional skills to be competitive in a changing market. WIA Could provide training options and funding to get someone working. Local WIA organizations or zones determine how the money is spent and the WIA will be graded on your success. Therefore, they are very selective.

Vocational Rehabilitation: Designed to address disabilities. What is a disability? A disability could be the result of physical, mental or emotional deficit. Please note that vocational services define a disability differently than Social Security. Vocation Rehabilitation will train and provide supportive services to get you ready to work. However, you must want to work and show the effort to work through programming and you must stay the course. Persistence, Grit, and Determination will make this program a success.

Job Skills: What is a job skill? When thinking about job skills, identify what specific things you have done on various jobs in the past. Define the skill down to very specific task including equipment and or machines you have operated or tasks you have performed. What is a transferable skill? Transferable skills are skills that may be suited for many occupations or jobs. An example would be someone that has the skill of organization. This skill can be used in many different ways.

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Do you have skills? Yes, we all have skills. You must be able to effectively identify and communicate to a prospective employer how your skills will suite the employer's need. Will the skills you learn/obtain within the system be counted? Yes, the task, jobs, discipline and education while in the institution will be counted and actually looks very positive on a resume. Will BOP programing be counted? Yes, studies have indicated that employers often look for those who have shown the desire to complete programming and have identified them as "completers". Staying the course and having the determination to make the most out of your time is easily recognized by employers and other service providers. This is one of the easiest ways to show a work ethic which is in high demand in the job market today.

Employment Documents: You need your social security card, valid identification, drivers' license, birth certificate, resume, certificates of completion, copy of your GED or high school diploma, transcripts from technical college or college. Do not wait until release to obtain important documents. This will only slow you down once you are released.

Job Readiness: I had an employer ask one of my guys, "Do you want a job or do you want to work?" What is the difference? An individual responding that he wants a job is more than likely a warm body willing to fill a uniform for a pay check. The individual wanting to work will be more invested and give more of an effort to make sure the job is done right. How can you prove that you are ready to work? What is included in job readiness? There are many indicators that an individual is ready to work including the following job readiness factors: 1) being on time; 2) solid means of transportation; 3) able to follow directions; 4) understands the hidden code or ethics of work; 5) dress; 6) attitude; 7) getting along well with others; 8) accepting directions and constructive criticism; 9) not making excuses when obstacles or problems occur;

Has your conduct while in the BOP been a reflection of your job readiness? Your conduct while in the Bureau of Prisons can be observed to reflect your readiness to work in how you demonstrate the above ready to work indicators.

Additionally, your willingness to accept direction, ask for assistance, and show a true willingness to learn and explore new ways of doing things all demonstrate a willingness to change and work towards the future. Are you responsible for outside factors that may hinder your readiness to work? Yes, we are responsible for our associations and how our family, friends, and significant others affect our ability to work. Look at your associations now. Negative peers and associations will always want you to stay where they are and will continue to pull you down to keep you where they are. The positive peers and associations will want you to move forward and will invest in your abilities and skills to assist you in being successful. Example: I had an offender on location monitoring prior to release from the halfway house. He told me that while in his yard cleaning up an old friend came up and attempted to get him to leave to meet up with some girls. He insisted even after being made aware he was on location monitoring. My comment to this was if this old friend was really a friend and genuinely interested in the offender, he would have stayed with him and assisted him with his work.

Answering the Felony Question

“The 3 R’s” Responsibility, Regret and Redemption:

There are many ways to answer the felony question. Please get with your counselor and begin working on a letter of explanation. All people make mistakes, but the most important factor is how do we respond to the mistake. The mistakes in our past should motivate us to do better, to learn and prove ourselves in the future.

Job search strategies: Start now! You must be able to identify your skills and know the job market in the area where you release. Each state has a Labor Market Explorer! Identify your interest! Identify your skills! Develop new skills! Know the Job Market! Networking is the Key!

Networking Defined: The process of Networking is the best method for the offender population to locate resources. You must be able to associate and network with those individuals who can put you in a position to be successful. Successful people associate with successful positive people. Networking is more than just going to the local labor department or putting in applications on line.

You have to know those who are in a position to hire you. Knowing, associating, meeting, and communicating with others for a purpose or goal is a simple definition of networking and this provides the opportunity to meet others that are pushing forward to be successful. Look for Churches, nonprofit organizations, and professional organizations in the local community.

H. Barriers

Barriers define: A Barrier is any problem, real or perceived, that is an obstacle to reaching your goals. Barriers can be defined in many different ways. Personal Barriers: - could be attitude; could be a learning disability; could be a physical disability; could be a drug addiction; Correctional Barriers: - barriers within the institution; limitations due to your incarceration; Legal Barriers: barriers based upon your legal status- detainers and pending charges.

I. Action Plan

Define your short term and long term goals:

Make sure any pending charge, citations, license suspensions are resolved ASAP! This will include any local or state pending matters! Don't take someone's word for it always follow up and check. This will give you a head start following your release.

Obtain identification and SS card ASAP! Do not put it off! These can be maintained in your BOP file and will follow you home! If seized by Law Enforcement, write and communicate with them to have them returned. They will destroy them if not claimed;

Take advantage of all programming opportunities specifically RDAP and other Thinking for Change, MRT, Courage to Change or cognitive programming. These programs reflect positively on you and notifies employers and other support agencies that you are motivated to take a new direction and path for your life.

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****Priority** should be given to your special conditions of supervision:
Substance Abuse; Mental Health; GED; Cognitive Programming**

****Priority** should be obtaining a positive mentor in the community where you will be released: Your success depends on your peers and associations now and upon release. Who you know makes a difference! Engage positive mentors immediately! Stack your deck of cards with those that can lift you up, invest in you and build your success.

Your Attitude: *"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. Attitude will make or break a company....a church....a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude....I am convinced that life is 10% of what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes". ~ Charles Swindoll*

**** Attitude defines you; You are the key to your success****