

PROJECT MEND SCOPE OF PROBLEM

Introduction

Making up only 5 percent of the world's population, the US holds 25 percent of the world's prison population; the highest prison population in the world. Approximately 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the United States. With the use of over four decades of punitive sentencing policies and restrictive parole release practices, Mass Incarceration has impacted the lives of many individuals, families, and communities.

On a local level, Maryland's criminal justice system has also adversely impacted the lives of Returning Citizens and the communities in which many return to with hopes to reside and rebuild. According to the *Parole Perspectives in Maryland: A Survey of People Who Returned to Prison from Parole and Community Justice Policy Institute, May, 2015*, it states that despite the correctional shift to a more rehabilitative and the use of evidence-based community supervision strategies, research suggests that more returning citizens are unsuccessful on parole, and are returning to prison.

The most recent national data show:

- **About 40 percent of people who leave prison will return to prison in three years**
- **Tens of thousands of people return to prison for technical violations:** Technical violations would include missing appointments, failing a urinalysis, moving without notice, as opposed to acquiring new offenses.

In comparison, Maryland's data show:

- **Almost a third of Maryland prison admissions are people returning to prison from parole.**
- **Four out of ten people released from prison returned to prison within three years.**

Baltimore's Returning Citizens and the Need

In Baltimore City, at a given time, almost 50% of African-American males between the ages of 18-35 are under the control of the criminal justice system, either incarcerated or under community supervision. Once release, many individuals face significant challenges attempting to re-establish themselves in the community. Many Returning Citizens formally incarcerated, return to under-resourced communities that lack access to essential resources like viable and stable housing, social/familial support, education, and employment. Research suggests that the incarceration of a family member increases household material stress, the risk of foster care placement, leads to behavioral and schooling problems in children and affects both mental and physical health.

Individuals released from incarceration are gravely impacted by statues and administrative rules that bar them from access to social, economic, and political reintegration. Even after successfully serving their time, laws and rules still disqualify many Returning Citizens from receiving any

supports including public benefits, the ability to obtain some employment opportunities, the right to vote or holding political office; this occurring all while being required to pay hefty restitution fees and be monitored by community supervision. As a result, under-resourced communities bear a disproportionate share of the burdens to support and serve the needs of Returning Citizens with limited to no access to the necessary services and tools needed for everyone to be successful.

Each year nationally, more than 700,000 incarcerated individuals leave federal and state prisons. Although a number of factors impede the ability of returning citizens to successfully reintegrate into communities, many barriers plague returning citizens to not have access to the knowledge, training, and skills to support a successful return to their communities.

This is where Project M.E.N.D believes it can support in helping **Move Everyone in New Directions**.

What Is Project 'M.E.N.D'?

Project M.E.N.D, works to provide a bridge for Returning Citizens to services and resources in the state of Maryland. Based out of Baltimore County, Maryland, MEND offers supports including re-entry services and an 6-12-month Re-entry Residential program. All state and federal offenders are eligible to participate with **no disqualifying offenses**. Prior to participants release from each facility, interested individuals will complete an Offender Reintegration Assessment in order to determine the individual needs and goal planning. MEND will offer each participant drug and alcohol counseling if needed as well as group and individual counseling. For participants who aspire to complete educational endeavors, MEND provides pre GED classes to prepare and help participants ultimately pass the GED exam. Participants will have access to MEND Educators, teachers who are responsible for administering the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) test in order to develop an education plan for each participant and providing tutoring classes as needed. Each participant will also be assigned a case manager who will be responsible for all wrap around services such as:

Money management

Goals setting

Obtaining/maintaining entitlements

Assistance in housing placements

Job readiness/placement

Medical compliance

Life/coping skills

MEND also provides counseling services--Two (2) 30 minute individual sessions weekly per participant and one (1) one-hour group session per week. A Therapeutic Team consisting of the Individual, the therapist, case manager(s), teachers, and other persons as appropriate, will work together to develop and revise the participant's Re-Entry Plan every 6 months.

In addition to participating in education, case management, and therapeutic services, each participant will also have the opportunity to participate in a variation of vocational programming in and around Baltimore. Offered courses are comprised of:

Culinary

Barbering

HVAC

Truck Driving

Carpentry

Medical Terminology and

Plumbing

Early Childhood Education

Automotive