The Reentry Checklist

This list is created with the understanding that there are many things that an inmate could be doing to prepare for release and reintegration into society, but that this does not always happen. It is also created as a resource for family members who are tasked with helping their loved one return home from prison, with no prior experience with all the steps required. Remember: THE FIRST 72 HOURS AFTER RELEASE ARE THE MOST CRITICAL HOURS IN REENTRY!

DISCLAIMER: Reentry of inmates into society is a broad and complex subject, with many variables – too broad to be solved by a single checklist. This list is provided as a starting point, but does not cover such issues as mental illness, geriatric needs, chronic illness, institutionalization, addiction, severe family problems, generational poverty, and the list goes on.

ASSUMPTIONS: The person who has been an inmate and is now reentering society from prison or jail (aka, the “reentrant”) has not been preparing for reentry pro-actively, has little or no outside support network, has very little money, yet has a real heart to be rehabilitated, not return to prison, and to become a contributing member of society.

NOTE: If the reentrant is on probation, you should work with their PO (Probation Officer) on most of this. Also, this checklist should apply equally well to male or female reentrants.

1.0 – THE FIRST 72-HOURS

- 1.1 – Clothing to wear out of the facility.
- 1.2 – Transportation away from the facility.
- 1.3 – Trip to the bank to cash the check the facility gave the reentrant.
- 1.4 – Go to lunch.
- 1.5 – Over lunch, review the details of their “Personal Reentry Plan” document (aka a “Pre-Release Plan”, a “Personal Transition Plan”, a “Reentry Needs Profile, etc.). If it does not exist, consider starting one.
- 1.6 – Determine, based on the amount of money available, where the reentrant will spend the night on the first night: ($0 - $50: family member or homeless shelter; $50 - $300: cheap motel, pay for one week if at all possible; $300 and up – various options).
- 1.7 – Go to the department store and get basic hygiene items (underwear, socks, toothpaste, etc.); if needed, get a small suitcase, backpack, or gym bag (reference “Reentry Budget” in the last section of this checklist.)
- 1.8 – If it is the winter time, make sure the reentrant has a warm coat (usually from a thrift store); also consider a warm hat and gloves.
- 1.9 – Contact any possible family members.
- 1.10 – Investigate the possibility of an inexpensive cell phone.
- 1.11 – Program your number into their cell phone and make sure they know how to use it.
1.12 – Contact any possible church affiliation or other faith-based contacts the reentrant might have.

1.13 – Make sure the reentrant has a basic supply of groceries.

1.14 – Make sure the reentrant has a good Bible.

1.15 – Give the reentrant a day or two to “decompress” to get acclimated to the outside world.

1.16 – If the reentrant is a Sex Offender, make sure they register with local law enforcement within 72 hours of release.

1.17 – Help the reentrant get to the first available church service.

1.18 – If they have a chronic need for medication, they “should” exit the system with a 30-day supply; if not, contact the County Health Dept. to determine what options are available.

2.0 – WEEK 1

2.1 – Help the reentrant accumulate all identification documents and determine what is needed:

- Birth Certificate
- State Picture ID
- Social Security Card
- Proof of Citizenship
- Veteran’s ID
- Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB card)
- Eventually, their Driver’s License

2.2 – Develop a plan for obtaining necessary documents as soon as possible (NOTE: there can be costs associated with obtaining some of these).

2.3 – Analyze the various court costs, fines, and fees that may have been levied against the reentrant and make a plan for going to the courthouse to address these.

2.4 – Analyze the back Child Support payments that may have been accrued by the reentrant and make a plan for going to DHS to address these.

2.5 – Analyze the status of the reentrant’s driver’s license and, if needed, develop a plan for paying any restitution costs, fines, etc.

2.6 – Work with DHS to acquire Food Stamps (SNAP program) as soon as possible.

2.7 – Show the reentrant how to call 2-1-1 for help with various social services.

3.0 – WEEK 2

3.1 – Begin the process of searching for employment with a basic skills assessment and a needs assessment.
3.2 – Use the document “A Roadmap to Employment in Oklahoma City” as a starting point, if they are going to be living in Oklahoma City. Otherwise, contact your local WorkForce office.

3.3 – If bus transportation is available, help the reentrant purchase a bus pass (7-day, etc.); otherwise transportation may need to be provided to facilitate the job search.

3.4 – If housing is becoming an issue, contact DHS for housing alternatives.

3.5 – Involve the reentrant in one or more community-based or faith-based support groups to provide a healthy circle of potential friends (Celebrate Recovery, AA, NA, etc.).

3.6 – In between social services appointments and job searching, help the reentrant earn some spending money by helping them find odd jobs such as raking leaves, washing windows, working at the local car wash (part time) or working through local “day labor” staffing companies.

4.0 – REENTRY BUDGET

Here we provide a basic budget for helping someone re-establish their life immediately after returning home from prison. Obviously, housing is the biggest cost. If they can not stay with a family member, we assume they must stay in a motel for the first 30 days, and start our budget there. (Example is for a man.)

- If you can find a decent motel with a monthly rate, you can often get it for close to $20 per night, but it could be higher, depending on various factors, like weekly rate only. 30 nights X $20 = $600
  * make sure you get a room with a microwave & small refrigerator!
- $100 cash, spending money (be careful giving a reentrant large sums of money – ready cash, which leads to many temptations, has been the downfall of many reentrants)
- Clothing and Personal Items (remember, Goodwill will often help a new reentrant with $40 of free clothing, etc.) Budget $100 (at a thrift store):
  - Change of clothes: 2 pair blue jeans, 2 work shirts, belt, tennis shoes, socks, underwear
  - Winter clothing: warm coat, insulated hat, warm gloves, thermal underwear
  - Personal items: wallet, key chain, backpack, duffle bag, portfolio (for important papers)
  - Miscellaneous items: rain poncho, steel-toed boots (optional)
- Cell phone - $100
- Bicycle (used), chain, bike lock - $50 (preferably more)
- 30-day bus pass (if available) - $50
- TOTAL: $1,000 – (don’t forget food stamps & food programs, otherwise meals are very expensive!)