

FROM CUSTODY TO  
COMMUNITY

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION PRISON MINISTRY  
REENTRY RESOURCE GUIDE

*AdventSource*

From Custody to Community Reentry Resource Guide

2025 Edition

Created by the North American Division Prison Ministries

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# Purpose

This Curriculum Resource Guide was developed by the North American Division Reentry Curriculum Committee as a resource to Seventh-day Adventist Churches and Transitional Houses wanting to serve people returning to the community after incarceration. This resource covers a broad range of interventions that address the challenges many incarcerated people have in common.

Churches and/or Transitional Houses can use this Curriculum Resource Guide to incorporate elements of each section into their ministry, or they may choose to focus on a few specific elements to offer. The choice should be based on an evaluation of the following:

1. What your ministry team feels would be most beneficial to those you serve.
2. What your ministry team feels you have the capacity to offer.
3. What is already being offered in your community to which you can refer your participants.

It is the intention of the Reentry Curriculum Committee that this Curriculum Resource Guide reflects the following:

- Shared information that can be implemented within the context of a house, or without housing options.
- A resource that ministries can tailor to support their local needs.
- Reflections of the best practices for the United States, Canada, Bermuda, and all North American Division territories.



# Introduction

There's an abundant need and opportunity for ministry to those affected by incarceration within the North American Division. In fact, some of the highest incarceration rates in the world are within this territory. This not only represents a large number of people who do not have the freedom to explore faith in God through visiting a church, but also a large number of people who are struggling to find a path in life where they can thrive and become productive.

Thankfully, many Seventh-day Adventist ministries have stepped forward to go “behind bars” and offer active teaching and preaching programs, conduct worship services, offer Bible studies, teach life skills, and other activities. Through this ministry hearts and attitudes have been changed as men and women have accepted the hope that can be found in Jesus.

However, when these individuals leave incarceration, they can face a range of challenges resulting from their past life experiences, such as:

- Low levels of formal education
- Poor inter-personal skills
- Physical and mental challenges stemming from drug use
- Lack of planning and financial management skills

Some challenges result from having been incarcerated, such as:

- Loss of livelihood
- Loss of personal belongings
- Loss of important personal relationships and social networks
- Mental health difficulties, or self-defeating habits and attitudes

Many correctional institutions recognize these barriers and may offer programs designed to prepare individuals to reenter society. Programs such as academic education, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and job training can be important building blocks for establishing a new life, once released.

Returning citizens can be filled with dread upon release, facing questions such as:

- Where will I live?
- How will I make a living?
- How will my family and friends feel about me being back in their lives?

Loneliness and frustration overtake many returning citizens, and they may relapse into criminal behavior, or addiction. Some even die by suicide.

The intent of Seventh-day Adventist Reentry Ministry is to establish a bridge between incarceration and a productive, positive life, by providing the needed support for returning citizens through faith-based reentry programs while creating a path from custody to community.

# Phases of Prison Ministry

It may help to think of Prison Ministry in three stages:

- **Pre-release:** While still incarcerated, inmates must decide what they want for their lives. During this time some will take advantage of the classes and services that may be offered within the corrections system. Seventh-day Adventist Prison Ministry programs can be part of these opportunities, and in the process, encourage positive decision-making.

As inmates near release, they will be making plans with their corrections counselors to locate housing and other necessary resources. It is important that your Seventh-day Adventist Reentry Ministry fully understands this process, to see how it can work smoothly to best fit potential participants.

- **Reentry:** The timeframe following release. Not everybody who leaves prison intends to lead a different lifestyle, and for those who do, the challenge may be too great to stay out of prison. Stable housing and a positive support system are keys to successfully navigating the process of putting skills to work, building positive relationships, and establishing a productive life. While all phases must fit together, the focus of this Curriculum Resource Guide is the reentry phase.
- **Transition:** Ongoing, active life in the community, free from criminal behaviors, with the individual thriving to their God-given potential.

## Successful Reentry Ministry

A successful Reentry Ministry builds the resilience of returning citizens to resist pressures of return to the lifestyle and habits that led to their incarceration. There are three areas of personal development that are key to success:

**Relationships:** Learn to identify and develop healthy, balanced relationships where each party takes personal responsibility for their behavior and the success of the relationship. This includes the relationship between the returning citizen, their family, friends, supervisors/co-workers, and church fellowship. There may be times when it might be healthier for all involved to terminate the relationship.

**Skills:** Develop the skills necessary to lead a productive, independent life. These include employment and daily living which allows individuals to create an independent life, knowing they are created in the image of God.

**Faith in God:** A spiritual foundation is the hallmark of the Seventh-day Adventist Prison Ministry. We recognize that successful change is fueled by the power of God, and we want to give every opportunity for individual spiritual growth. A caveat is that we don't ever force anyone to be baptized or to make proclamations of faith as a qualifier for entry into our ministry programs. Participation in Seventh-day Adventist Prison Ministries is based on desire and a mutual accountability in following behavioral guidelines. Spirituality is central to who we are. It is woven into our ministry programs, and it is never forced on anyone.

## Church Support

The churches surrounding the Reentry Ministry play a vital role. Be prepared to receive these people by providing an emotionally and physically safe environment, for both returning citizens and other attendees. This safe environment will enable them to learn and grow. The church should also anticipate requests for baptism; be prepared to receive these requests.

Many Seventh-day Adventist churches, for different reasons, are not open to ministering to this particular population group. While there is never a "perfect church," if your church is unfavorable toward those who have been incarcerated, you may want to re-think your participation in prison and Reentry Ministry. On the other hand, many

Seventh-day Adventist churches have created a safe harbor for persons from all walks of life, by supporting active ministries for children, men, community services, and prison ministry initiatives. Setting clear expectations is the key to this. For further information see Chapter 3 on Church Readiness.

## Community Support

It is highly unlikely that a single church or Transitional House will be able to meet all the needs of a returning citizen. A successful ministry will network within their community, becoming acquainted with correction agencies, other organizations engaged in reentry programs for resources, support, and advice.

## Ministry Leaders

All ministry personnel should view themselves as a mentor and consider all interactions with a returning citizen as a mentoring opportunity. We highly recommend courses in mentor/mentee relationships for volunteers and church members.

## Transitional Houses

In Canada, there are a few, if any, transitional facilities owned or operated by Seventh-day Adventists. However, several Prison Ministry volunteers associated with the Ontario Prison Ministry Association of Seventh-day Adventists (OPMASDA) have been volunteering with non-Seventh-day Adventist organizations that are already engaged in this aspect of ministry.

If you have plans of opening a Transitional House, for further details and materials you will need, we recommend the Transitional House Resource Guide, available through AdventSource. Search for this and other Prison Ministry materials at [www.AdventSource.org](http://www.AdventSource.org).

Additional prison ministry resources can be found on the North American Division Adult Ministries website: <https://nadadultministries.org/>





# How to Use this Resource Guide

Reentry Ministries must be holistic and recognize the multiple challenges and opportunities a returning citizen experiences. Because of this, Reentry Ministries should include multiple facets of support and/or include referrals to other supportive ministry programs and resources. The Custody to Community Ministry Resource Guide includes a variety of options that support a multi-faceted ministry.

Local Reentry Ministries can select what is appropriate for them to offer as they evaluate the internal and external resources at their disposal.

This Resource Guide is divided into three chapters:

- Pre-release
- Reentry
- Church Readiness

Each chapter is divided into sections which represent key areas of program organization and/or personal growth. Within these sections are listed a variety of resources and programming recommendations to incorporate in your Reentry Ministry which are presented as **Program Options “Essential,”** and **“Additional Options.”**

**Essential Options** indicates the items that are core to a successful reentry and imperative to the success of the Reentry Ministry.

**Additional Options** offer resources and programs to further enrich your participants.

The focus of this Resource Guide is to offer options for supportive programming needed during the reentry process. However, these activities cannot stand alone. The work done by the returning citizen, and the ministry, prior to release, will have a profound impact on the success of the individual. Incarcerated individuals who participate in classes, religious services, or work training while incarcerated, are more likely to have acquired tools for success upon release.

In the same way, the readiness of the associated Seventh-day Adventist Church to engage in Prison Ministry will also make a difference in their success. Chapter 3, Church Readiness Ideas, addresses what this looks like.







## CHAPTER 1

# Pre-Release

## Ministry Self-Assessment

An honest evaluation of your ministry's capacity to serve is essential to any successful ministry. **Skipping this step can lead to serious problems, if participants are accepted into your program that you are not able to help. At best, this would be a waste of your time and theirs. At worst, it could leave them without the needed accountability and support, and the possibility of re-incarceration.**

As you assess your ministry team, congregation, and community, you'll be able to identify strengths and weaknesses. Knowing the expertise and skills you have access to will help you to select candidates whose needs match your abilities. Questions that may help in your assessment include, but are not limited to:

- What experience does your congregation or ministry team have with Prison Ministry?
- What related education or expertise does your church or ministry team have?
- What further education will you need to be successful?
- What kind of facilities do you have access to for program operations?
- What is the attitude of your church toward returning citizens?
- What are the typical needs of a returning citizen?
- What other services are being provided in your area for returning citizens?
- Is there a Transitional House already in operation in your area?
- Is there a facility that could be used for transitional housing?
- Are there appropriate spaces in the church facility to offer classes, counseling, or support groups?
- Are there existing local programs you could partner with to offer Reentry Ministry programming at their location?
- What mental health workers do you have access to? In your congregation? In your area?
- Who in your community needs to know that you are offering Reentry Ministry programming? This could include corrections staff, other reentry agencies, post-release supervisory agencies, etc.

These questions are a starting point to exploring your place in Reentry Ministry. Other questions are sure to come to mind. Answer these too, and see where you find dead ends and open roads.

**Again, it is crucial not to skip or shortcut this process.** You may not be able to answer all questions before beginning your program, but you need to have a good foundation of understanding to make informed decisions.

Annual assessments will keep you on track toward meeting your goals. As the environment where your ministry takes place changes, be sure your programs and policies are making the highest impact.

Laws and policies change, new resources become available, and other reentry programs may open in your community. Each of these can create challenges or opportunities that you need to be aware of to help your participants successfully navigate the system. Failing to do this could mean that those you serve will miss out on resources needed to succeed. *Appendix 1* is a sample questionnaire that you can use for ongoing evaluations.



## Terminology

Department of Corrections is the corrections system in Bermuda and the United States. Correctional Services of Canada is the Canadian corrections system.

## Application Process

Depending on your programming, your application may be one of the first interactions you have with an inmate approaching release. A live-in program will probably have the most extensive application process, while a single program such as Alcoholics Anonymous is open to the public and won't have any application process.

The application process will help you identify what each returning citizen will need to make a successful transition and will assist you in evaluating whether they will be a good match with your strengths. The following questions will also help you to assess how serious the individuals are about making a change in their lives:

- How did they spend their time while incarcerated?
- Did they take advantage of education and skills classes?
- Have they been consistent in positive behaviors?

As you learn about each candidate, in light of your ministry assessment, analyze your capabilities to help this person, or perhaps they could be better served elsewhere.

Manipulation has become a way of life for some, and your applicant may be willing to say whatever they think you want to hear to be accepted into the program. A thorough application procedure will help you discover as much as you can before deciding. Don't skip steps to expedite the process.

The application process begins while the individuals are still incarcerated. The application process should include the following:

1. **Application Form:** While incarcerated, each potential candidate must complete a Reentry Ministry Application. Depending on the policy of the correction facility, this may be done through their corrections counselor. You will need to check with the institution(s) you will be working with to learn how this works, and what staff members you will be working with. *Appendices 2A and 2B* are sample applications to give you an idea of the information you'll be looking for. Other paperwork that can be used in the acceptance process is included in *Appendix 2C*.
2. **Relapse Prevention:** Relapse is a very real danger and you will need to be vigilant about it. Be keenly aware of what is taking place with your participants, and help them to be aware as well. One tool you might find useful in evaluating a potential participant is the FASTER Relapse Awareness Scale. It is part of the Genesis Process Program referenced in the Physical Health & Wellbeing section of Chapter 2. More information can be found at <https://www.genesisprocess.org/handouts>.
3. **Once the application is received** from an inmate, a small Application Committee (this committee may be comprised of one person) will do the following:
  - **Screen application:** Are there any indications that this person would not fit well in your ministry? Potential problems might be that your location isn't in the area where the inmate will be released, or the offense for which they were incarcerated does not fit within the parameters of who you have decided to work with.
  - **Request a copy of the inmate's records from the correctional institution.** This will tell you if your applicant took advantage of learning opportunities while incarcerated, or if any disciplinary actions had been necessary. In the United States, these are often referred to as a "jacket."

- **Conduct three separate interviews with the inmate.** Interviews should be conducted face-to-face, giving you an opportunity to get to know the applicant. In this interview, look for consistency in what is said, and in their attitude.
  - **Collect recommendations from others** such as the chaplain, their counselor, and their probation and parole officers. See *Appendix 3* for a sample Character Referral/Recommendation Form.
4. The **completed application is submitted and reviewed by the Ministry Board.** Additional questions may come up during this step which will need to be answered.
  5. **Make a board determination** (either to Accept or Reject) based on set criteria which was established through the Ministry Self-Evaluation.
  6. **Results are shared** with the inmate, their prison counselor, and any other appropriate persons.
  7. **Establish communication with everyone who will be involved in the reentry process.** For example, the counselor, probation, and/or parole officer. An ongoing dialogue will keep you informed of important information such as the release date, post-release requirements, and someone who the returning citizen is accountable to. This information will help you set realistic expectations and appropriate guidelines within your program. Check with your local system to know who you should work with.

## Record and Report

As your programming gets underway, keep track of your activities and outcomes. This includes how many people were served, what programs were offered, how many volunteers were involved, and the number of hours of volunteer service. Outcomes are the results of your programs, and what you record depends on your activities. If you offer support to prevent addiction relapse, how long have your participants been drug-free? If you offer job training, how many participants gained employment and how long did it take them?

These statistics become vital when you evaluate the success of your ministry. There are always ways to improve, but memory and personal perceptions can be faulty. Good data will guide you in building a more effective and efficient ministry.

The results of your work should also be reported to your local conference officials, union leaders, and the North American Division. Others may see information in the data that you may be overlooking, and they will be able to provide valuable feedback. In addition, it is important that the wisdom gained from your work be made available and understood in other places where ministry is taking place, and for those considering beginning this type of ministry. Your reports will raise the knowledge and understanding of Reentry Ministry work throughout the North American Division.

## Canadian Corrections

In Canada, effective readiness for release is difficult to assess because some institutionally-based treatment programs delivered by the Correctional Services of Canada appear to have a significant impact on the rate of recidivism following release. These programs are voluntary, so many inmates do not participate and are subsequently released into the community without any pre-release preparation. Parole and other conditional release decisions are based on whether or not an offender has participated in these programs. These programs result in up to 50% decrease in recidivism.

## Circles of Support and Accountability Canada (CoSA)

Some Seventh-day Adventist Prison Ministry teams work through the Mennonite ministry of Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) or other contracted agencies to select an appropriate inmate to work with.

CoSA Canada is the Canadian national organization for Circles of Support and Accountability. It is a Canadian restorative justice program for individuals who have committed serious sexual offences. CoSA allows the community to play a direct role in the restoration, integration, and risk management of people who are often seen with only fear and anger.

A “Circle” involves a group of three to five screened, trained volunteers who commit themselves to support and hold accountable the “Core Member” who is typically assessed as being a high risk to reoffend. Because he has been held to the end of his sentence, he is returning to the community with little or no support available to him and often with much media attention. There are CoSA sites across Canada, especially in major provincial cities.

## Assess Needs at Release

Once you’ve determined who will be accepted into your program, you’ll want to determine the needs they’ll have in the first 24 to 36 hours after they walk out of the prison. This might include weather-appropriate clothes, toiletries, or groceries. Assess what the returning citizen will have when they walk out of the institution and what you can supply.

*Appendix 4* offers a checklist of items you can inquire about. Tailor the form to fit the protocols surrounding the release of inmates in your area, local climate, etc. Supplying needs may be a way for a supporting church or others to participate in your program.







## CHAPTER 2

# Post-Release

### Intake & Orientation

Intake and orientation is more extensive in a transitional housing context, but important for all programs. It provides an opportunity for the receiving facility to assess the needs of the returning citizen, as well as acquainting them with rules, policies, and expectations required of the ministry.

All essential documents should be reviewed and signed. In a home, these include accountability agreements, registration forms, house rules, and schedules pertaining to household expectations and program assignments.

If you're providing programming without housing, you still want your participants to understand what resources you offer and what expectations you have for their participation and behavior.

### Complete Program Registration and In-take Process

- Outline standards of participation and sign registration processing forms. (*See Appendices 5A, 5B and 5C.*)
- Collect personal contact information and emergency contacts. (*See Appendix 6.*)
- Tour and review rules and policies of your program.
- Set initial goals and timelines for each participant.
- Review the schedule with participant.

### Ministry Volunteers

The caliber of your volunteers dictates the integrity of your ministry. Many returning citizens have experienced breaches of trust and judgment. Your volunteers are as important as the materials and programs you select. Searching for opportunities to network and learn from other programs, as well as pursuing more formal educational forums, will improve and strengthen the volunteers' ability to shepherd people through a successful reentry.

In addition, each of you should sign an accountability agreement. Just as the expectations need to be clear for the returning citizens, the expectations and standards for the ministry also need to be clear to the volunteers. A sample of the agreement has been supplied in *Appendix 7*.

### Personal Growth

Personal growth is an ongoing process of understanding and developing oneself in order to achieve one's fullest potential. It is a vital part in the returning citizen's growth, maturity, success, and happiness. It is the foundation of emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual health. It is a good idea for prospective participants [pre-entry] to develop short and long-term goals as part of the application process. These goals could include family reunification, anger management, decision making, recovery, developing a closer relationship with Christ, etc. Upon entry, these goals should be reviewed with the returning citizen and re-written and/or updated as they change, if needed. Goals should be evaluated periodically with the returning citizen and their mentor or counselor to make sure they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely.



A successful Reentry Ministry provides the returning citizen with both the incentive and the resources to become the best possible version of themselves. It should offer each one the tools needed to heal and grow spiritually, mentally, emotionally, socially, and physically. An important task of the mentor is to open the returning citizen to awareness of the possibilities and opportunities around them. The mentor should encourage them to forge on, utilizing the power of prayer to encourage, and remind them they can do all things through Christ Jesus. This is critical.

Realizing that personal growth is different for everyone, the Reentry Ministry must provide opportunities for participants to have one-on-one and group counselling, skills assessments, and skills development. Partnering with resources and programs within the community, such as Day Labor Programs, Vocational Training Centers, and Job Readiness Agencies, is vital to the ministry's success in assisting returning citizens to find employment and establish a new life outside of prison.

## Program options include:

### *Essential:*

- **One-on-one counseling:** Personally meeting with each participant to check on their progress is an essential part of their success. Meeting to discuss their progress toward achieving their goals and assessing how they are coping with the stress of reentry will help you identify problems as they emerge and seek ways to address them. The person conducting the counseling sessions should have some related professional training such as chaplaincy, counseling, and or life coaching.
- **Continued (long-term) goal setting and tracking:** This can be done during the one-on-one counseling sessions or incorporated in a group setting.

### *Additional Options:*

- **Mentorship:** Surround a returning citizen with a network of supportive, trusted people that understand the returning citizen's needs. This circle of support provides accountability, encouragement, and support.
- **Literacy / Academic Achievement:** Classes to boost literacy and academic achievement can give added self-confidence as well as expand a returning citizen's job opportunities. Examples include: GED, literacy, and vocational training.

You may offer these classes or they can take advantage of classes already offered in the community. You should be familiar with other resources open to returning citizens in your community, and help them navigate the enrollment process. It can be intimidating for many when attempting something new. You can lower their stress level by providing someone to walk with them through the enrolling process.

- **Life Skills:** Many of those who are incarcerated haven't had the benefit of good social and household training. Life skills classes can teach the basics that many of us take for granted, and which will help them in forming a new lifestyle. There's also the added benefit of teaching skills that can change how they interact with others. These include parenting skills, marriage/family relations, cooking, and household management.



# Spiritual Growth

Seeing others develop a personal relationship with Jesus is the goal of any Seventh-day Adventist ministry. This friendship is what gives the inspiration and strength to overcome destructive habits, attitudes, and impulses.

Like each of us, returning citizens will experience spiritual growth in a number of different ways. Providing a variety of approaches to the throne of God opens the possibility for people to connect in ways that resonate with their personalities and experiences.

While baptism is not required, it is the logical end result of these activities, and should be made available to the participants in the programs.

## Program options include:

*Essential:*

- **Bible Studies:** Many Reentry Ministry programs have found individual Bible studies to be one of the most effective forms of spiritual growth, and it is recommended as a foundation of other activities. Personally studying the Word of God gives individuals the opportunity to become familiar with the Bible and to experience being led by the Holy Spirit into a deeper spiritual understanding.

A number of Bible study guides are available. Below are a few that many have found to be effective. There are other excellent studies available. You may want to explore various studies which those you work with would find enjoyable and relatable.

- **La Fe de Jesus** – (*The Faith of Jesus*)

<https://adventistbookcenter.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=la+fet+de+jesus> and

<https://adventistatibas.wordpress.com/2015/06/30/la-fe-de-jesus-20-estudios-biblicos-en-pdf/>

- **What the Bible Says** by United Prison Ministry International

<http://www.upmi.org/books>

A set of 9 Bible study guides accompanies the book *What the Bible Says*. Available in English and Spanish. Purchased in sets of 3, 10, 20, or 30.

- **MESSAGE Magazine Bible Lessons**

<https://www.messagemagazine.com/shop/bible-study-pack-of-12/>

Set of 12 Bible study guides written by Stephen Brooks.

- **Seeds of Truth**

<https://www.endtimeslikethese.org/Seedsoftruth.html>

Set of 21, 4-page Bible studies. Available online or in print (bulk pricing offered). English and Spanish.

- **It is Written**

<https://itiswritten.study/lessons-information>

Set of 25 free Bible study guides. Available in print or electronically.

At the end of each guide is a Personal Commitment question.

- **Discover Bible Study Lessons**

<https://store.vop.com/collections/discover-bible-guides>

Set of 26 lessons available for purchase in a set or individually through the Voice of Prophecy. Multiple versions and supporting materials are offered. An online option is available.

- **Amazing Facts**

<https://www.amazingfacts.org/media-library/read/c/2/t/bible-study-guides#studymore>

Set of 27 Bible study guides available in 10 languages in print, audio, and video on the Amazing Facts website.

#### *Additional Options:*

- **Worship Service Attendance and Involvement:** Becoming a part of the family of God provides fellowship and positive relationships in returning citizens' lives. Joining a local congregation gives many opportunities for support and encouragement, along with observing the spiritual growth of others.  
  
Not only does attending congregational worship services offer a valuable experience, but also contributing to the church community can provide essential experience in organization, leadership, and working with others, all the while assisting returning citizens in becoming contributing members of the surrounding community.
- **Group Devotionals:** Present the opportunity to have deeper sharing and discussions within a trusted smaller group of people through group devotionals.
- **Meditation/Prayer:** There are many ways to develop a deeper prayer life. Prayer partners, prayer journals, or spiritual mentors are a few that may be helpful.
- **Sabbath Preparation Activities:** Transition Homes have the added opportunity to incorporate home-life habits in their schedule. This includes Sabbath preparation, meal-time blessings, and family devotions. However, these practices can be encouraged and taught in other settings as well.

## Physical Health & Wellness

Transitional Programs today have a myriad of factors to take into consideration when designing a reintegration format, one of them being health. So the question stands, why would a comprehensive health regimen be important for returning citizens?

Research from the American Public Association has shown that “People returning from incarceration to communities have higher rates of chronic diseases, mental health disorders, and infectious diseases; reentry planning programs are inadequate, and people relying on public assistance can be prevented from accessing services and are likely to experience recidivism.”

The goal of the Reentry Ministry is to identify the contributing factors of health and lifestyle for each returning citizen and their families, resulting in harmonious reintegration into their communities, as a result, reducing the rate of recidivism.

### Program options include:

#### *Essential:*

- **Safe food preparation education** – If your Reentry Ministry is taking place in a home setting, it is important to reduce the risk of illness due to spoiled or mismanaged food. Someone at the residence should have a Food Handlers Permit, to make sure good practices are followed and that this knowledge is shared.
- **Management of chronic conditions** – Some returning citizens have chronic illnesses that need to be monitored and managed, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and PTSD. They will be hard pressed to be successful in reentry if they are coping with flare-ups and symptoms.

While each person is responsible for their health, they may need support in understanding and handling their illness. You will want to be aware of any chronic illnesses your participants have and offer the appropriate assistance and encouragement. This could mean connecting them with the appropriate medical care, making sure they're taking their medications, offering classes for healthy living with chronic illnesses, and helping to them find resources which outline the appropriate medications and foods.

- **Addiction Recovery Services** – Several programs exist that provide education on managing addictions to minimize the probability of relapsing. You will want to explore and research which available programs will be the

most beneficial in your context which includes the expertise of your staff, the needs of your participants, and what assistance is already available to them in the community. A few suggested programs are listed below.

- **The Genesis Process** – A program designed to train professional and lay counselors in relapse prevention. Outlined in a ten-unit workbook, the material focuses on identifying and working through underlying issues that drive compulsive addictive behavior. It is not just limited to drug and alcohol addictions; it addresses other types of compulsions such as codependency, work-a-holism, eating disorders, sexual abuse, shopping, gambling, physical and emotional abuse, and personality disorders.

Along with focusing on destructive behaviors, The Genesis Process is arranged in a 10-step process. It offers each participants the tools [including a Relapse Awareness Scale] to heal and grow spiritually, mentally, socially, and physically through:

- Self-discovery
- Understanding addictions
- Scripture memorization
- Individual counseling
- Key thoughts

For more information on The Genesis Process Program, visit [www.genesisprocess.org](http://www.genesisprocess.org).

Michal Dye, JCADC, NCACII and Patricia Fancher, CACIII, MFCC, Ph.D. “The Genesis Process—A Relapse Prevention Workbook for Addictive/Compulsive Behaviors,” 3rd Edition, 2007.

- **Journey to Wholeness** – A 12-step model developed by Adventist Recovery Ministries. The program is for anyone in the grip of an unhealthy dependence on substances or other destructive behaviors. Journey to Wholeness helps participants address an unlimited number of problems in a small group setting. Available at [www.AdventSource.org](http://www.AdventSource.org).
- **Breathe Free 2.0** – A complete makeover of the Seventh-day Adventist developed Breathe Free Program. The 2.0 version uses a new approach because attitudes toward smoking have changed. Today’s smokers don’t need to be convinced that tobacco is bad for them, and they cannot be scared or lectured into quitting. Instead Breathe Free 2.0 draws on current research to create new methods.

The program is free and can be used individually, but group participation is recommended. More information can be found at <https://www.breathefree2.com/welcome>.

#### *Additional Options:*

- **Pathways to Wholeness** – A three-month, 10-session discipleship program based on Bible principles. Lessons cover forgiveness, restoration, healing, freedom, and living out the principles of a new life while following God’s Word. More information can be found at <https://rcministry.org/pathways-to-wholeness/>.
- **CREATION Life** – This program is based on the eight principles of physical, mental and spiritual wellness: choice, rest, environment, activity, trust, interpersonal relationships, outlook, and nutrition. Creation Life can be presented with a 30-day action plan following each topic to extend the program. Support for participants comes in different forms, including an App and training for facilitators. More information can be found at <https://creationlife.com/>.



# Mental Health

Mental health is a term that includes our social, psychological, and emotional well-being. The ways individuals feel, act, and think are influenced by their mental health. It also impacts how individuals cope with stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health plays a vital role in our lives regardless of circumstances or age.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

The goal of a Reentry Ministry is to provide the participants with tools that can help them cope with the stresses of life ultimately resulting in their successful transition back into the community.

## Program options include:

### *Essential:*

- **Stress and Anger Management:** Many individuals who have been incarcerated struggle with managing their emotions and responses, especially when experiencing stress. Simply understanding the underlying causes of behavior and learning strategies for redirecting thoughts and actions can make a difference. One resource for teaching techniques and awareness to manage emotions is shared here.
- **Stress Beyond Coping:** This stress management seminar is another resource that can be utilized with or without instructor training. It teaches how to manage stress by learning how to convert negative stress into positive stress. Learn more at <https://www.stressbeyondcoping.com/>.
- **Coordinate with the corrections system for resources:** The corrections system is aware of the mental health challenges of their residents, and they have resources that may be helpful to you. This is especially important in the immediate transitional period, so the continuum of care is not broken when medical attention is needed.
- **Mental Health First Aid:** Unless you are a mental health professional, there will be times when you will not be able to help a person with a mental health problem. Those working with returning citizens should seek further knowledge about how to identify red flags and recognize when to refer to a mental health provider.

There are classes available to help you identify when individuals need professional medical attention. Mental Health First Aid is available throughout the United States, and equivalent classes may be available in other locations. Look for a class near you at [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org). Check your local resources for other options.

- **Referral Network:** As mentioned above, there are times when you will need to seek assistance for a person with mental health issues from a medical professional. You may have these resources within your church network or in the community. Prepare for these occasions by developing a referral directory and have a protocol built ahead of time.

### *Additional Options:*

- **Stepping Up: A Call to Courageous Manhood:** Designed to be presented in 10 sessions. The objective for using the “Stepping Up” series is to challenge and assist men to boldly forge into courageous manhood. “Stepping Up” defines courage through the five stages of manhood, and commissions men to honestly evaluate where they stand in their duties of masculinity, which includes reconnecting with their families and community as they reenter the free society. It then prepares them to bravely master their life purpose by developing a strategic plan and establishing an achievable vision. Written by Tim Grissom and John Majors. Family Life Publishing, Little Rock, Arkansas.
- **Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, etc.:** Support groups provide a safe environment for sharing and growth. Connecting your participants to others who understand their challenges and can offer appropriate support and strategies can be a simple way to strengthen the network of support for reentry.

- **Decision Making:** How do you make a decision? If you can't identify your process, then it is difficult to change your decisions. This simple class teaches the basics for making decisions and how to make them differently. See *Appendix 8* for a class outline.

## Canada:

Canadian Mental Health Association (CAMHA) has many resources and classes for overcoming mental health issues. Learn more about this organization at <https://cmha.ca/about-cmha>.

## Social & Emotional Health

For a transition into society to be successful, you need to consider the needs of the whole human being, including their social and emotional growth. Individuals seeking a new start must be supported in their active participation in the community.

Building healthy social networks and interpersonal skills takes time and practice. Ministries like yours can provide these opportunities through activities where specific skills are learned for the first time or relearned in a more positive way. Forums for practice can look like personal mentorship, support groups, or group activities with family.

This is a foundational module which you can build on, given the specific needs and resources of your ministry.

### Program options include:

*Essential:*

- **Support Groups** (see *Appendix 9*) are not only relevant, but essential for survival of individuals whose relationships with loved ones have been undermined. Support groups create a social network from others with like experiences, which encourages the returning citizen when family and friends may not be available.

Families of detained citizens emotionally serve time along with their spouses or significant others and could also benefit from the emotional and practical help that support groups provide.

*Additional Options:*

- Provide times for **recreation and socializing**, such as game nights.
- **Group Outings** to promote reconciliation and enrichment. Group outings can include returning citizens, children, and/or families. Activities could include cultural locations, educational forums, social activities, and parties. Some have sponsored children of returning citizens to summer camp. These all offer time together to promote reconciliation and exposure to new ideas and activities.
- **Family Reunification:** It is likely that those who have been incarcerated have strained relationships with family and friends. Interventions to mediate and heal can be invaluable to the returning citizen, family, and friends. Facilitating healthy time together and mediating the interactions can help individuals navigate these delicate situations.
- **Angel Tree** ([angeltree.org](http://angeltree.org)) and **Dream Academy** ([www.usdreamacademy.org](http://www.usdreamacademy.org)) are avenues for ministry to the children of those who are incarcerated.
- **Emotional Intelligence**, or EQ, refers to a person's capacity and skill to perceive, process, and regulate emotional information accurately and effectively. EQ allows returning citizens to understand and manage their emotions, to self-motivate, and to create positive social interactions that are far different than what they experienced in the prison community. It is one of the first steps in realizing their true potential as a free citizen and as a child of God. Developing EQ encourages positive traits from resilience to communication, motivation to stress management. The ability to identify, manage, and understand emotions helps the returning citizen communicate without resorting to confrontation. Appendix 10 contains an EQ self-assessment that will help them to begin this journey of discovery. It is also a great resource for the ministry team.

# Economic Health

Reentry has enormous financial challenges. Reintegration is not an automatic adjustment by returning citizens. The community continued to change while the individuals were incarcerated and the new social and economic landscape they will return to can be disorienting. Recidivism can be curtailed by offering interventions that will guide returning citizens through the new economic landscape.

Household finances are built on the equation: assets (savings, home ownership, education, a well-running car, etc.) + income (employment pay, benefits, etc.) – liabilities (monthly bills, larger debts). When these three are in balance, a household is better able to weather the storms that inevitably will come.

While income is the most pressing need upon release, research has shown that assets are the most often neglected, yet overwhelmingly, an essential factor for stability. Assets provide a pool of resources that smooth gaps in income or cover unexpected expenses. Consider ways to address each factor when planning your ministry.

Your goal is to offer suggestions, opportunities, and programs that will positively address each of the factors in the equation. This will promote financial solvency, restoration, and dignity for those who are attempting to readjust to the community of their choice.

## Program options include:

*Essential:*

- **Financial Planning/Budgeting.** A basic building block of establishing a stable household is financial planning and budgeting. Being able to manage income and expenses brings the ability to build a savings account and acquire other assets that manage financial emergencies. This can bring additional benefits, such as reduced stress, the ability to take advantage of opportunities, and goal setting for the future. Some ways to address building a healthy financial household include:

- **Budgeting classes or budgeting help.** Planning and following a monthly budget is a foundational skill to managing your finances. If this piece isn't in place, it will be difficult to reach any other financial goals. This can be simple or complex; done with paper and pen or on a computer. The key is that it should be understood and practiced by the returning citizen.
- **Financial Education Classes:** There are several financial education courses that can be offered. Visit the North American Division Stewardship Ministries website at [www.nadstewardship.org/](http://www.nadstewardship.org/) for ideas.

**In the United States** the following organizations offer free resources that you can order to help teach and motivate good money habits.

- **Financial Education Curriculum:** Money Smart is a free FDIC money management curriculum. It consists of 14 modules which can be used as a set or a la carte. Information available at:  
[www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart/](http://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart/)  
<https://catalog.fdic.gov/>
- **Financial Tools and Education:** The Consumer Protection Bureau offers free resources that include personal booklets to track debt, credit, and bill paying. Visit their website to order these or other items:  
[www.consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/your-money-your-goals/booklets-talk-about-money/](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/your-money-your-goals/booklets-talk-about-money/)
- **Facilitate application for state and federal benefits.** Your participants may not know what benefits they're eligible for, and the application processes can be intimidating. You could have someone to help navigate them through the process or have information on hand.
- **Savings plan for residents.** Having savings of one's own is proven to change a person's mindset and add resilience to a household budget. Many don't feel they are able to save, but even a little bit, saved systematically, can make a big difference. Setting up an agreed upon Systematic Giving Plan upon entry to your program creates the expectation and habit of saving.

### *Additional Options:*

- **Job Readiness Training:**
  - **Soft skills classes.** These could include interview practice, résumé writing, customer service, appropriate dress for a specific job, and tips for interacting while on the job.
  - **Technical training.** Participants in your program may need additional technical training to be suited for employment. You may find some technical training classes already existing in the community, or you may be able to offer some yourself.
  - **Apprenticeship programs with employers.** Not all employers are willing to hire returning citizens. Your ministry program could scout out and recruit potential employers who are willing to hire returning citizens.
- **Financial Coaching Services:** Coaching is different from mentoring or counseling. It is a proven method where the individual sets their goals and priorities based on their values, opportunities, knowledge, and challenges. The coach is not there to tell them what to do, but to help them explore options and overcome barriers.
- **Games/Small Group/Discussion:**
  - **Money Mindset:** Discussion cards for small groups help facilitate conversations around money issues. It promotes self-awareness and group-learning. The cards can be used in small groups for sharing and peer-to-peer learning. <https://theprosperityagenda.org/money-mindset-cards/>.
  - **Money Habitudes:** Help individuals identify their underlying attitudes about money and why they use it the way they do. Money Habitudes can be used in one-on-one sessions, couples counseling, or in groups. Available as card set or online at [www.moneyhabitudes.com/](http://www.moneyhabitudes.com/).

## Mandatory State & Federal Requirements

Returning citizens are typically released with some type of release plan. This may include a schedule of appointments with supervisory personnel, attendance to addiction recovery support groups, or drug testing. Adhering to all release requirements leads to total freedom, and Seventh-day Adventist Prison Ministries operate in cooperation with the related governing agencies. Your ministry should be supportive of the returning citizen fulfilling all the requirements and, in addition, if the ministry team becomes aware of an infraction, they should report it immediately to the appropriate authorities.

These include:

- Correctional Services of Canada
- Department of Corrections
- Mandatory Court Appearances
- Mandatory Drug Testing
- Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Canada)
- Parole Officer Visits

Your application process should inform you of which organizations and personnel are involved. You'll want to develop a good working relationship with them.





## Putting it All Together

This Curriculum Resource Guide includes quite a few ideas and resources that will help you construct a Reentry Ministry program. Of course, you won't have the resources to offer them all, nor will your participants be able to attend them all. They may have additional obligations to their release plans, employment commitments, and family responsibilities that will also take their time.

You'll need to choose your priorities and how to put them together into a ministry calendar that makes sense for those you serve. Below are examples of how a Transitional House might organize their support programs.

### Syllabus of Weekly Classes

CLASS	OBJECTIVES	MEETING FREQUENCY
JOURNEY TO WHOLENESS Developed by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Adventist Recovery Ministry.	To provide a safe environment and support system for individuals struggling with things that are hurting them or the people they love. It is presented in a 12-step biblical based, Christ-centered model for recovery from unhealthy dependence upon substances or other destructive behaviors.	Meetings are held once or twice a week.
THE GENESIS PROCESS: FASTER SCALE A Relapse Prevention and Addictive/Compulsive Behaviors course developed by Michael Dye, CADC, NCAC and, Patricia Fancher, CACIII, MFCC, PhD.	1) To identify and work through underlying issues with the participants that drive compulsive addictive behaviors by integrating biblical precepts for personal change, proven relapse prevention techniques, cognitive therapy principles, and the latest neurochemistry research relating to human behavior.  2) To offer each participant the tools to heal and grow spiritually, mentally, socially, and physically through self-discovery, understanding their addiction, Scripture memorization, and individual counseling.	Group meetings are held once a week, and on an individual basis when behaviors of possible relapse are observed.
STEPPING UP—A CALL TO COURAGEOUS MANHOOD Author: Dennis Rainey, Family Life. FamilyLife.com	To define courage through five stages of manhood, and to commission men to honestly evaluate where they stand in their duties as men, and to prepare men to bravely master their life purpose by developing a strategic plan and establishing a winning vision.	Meetings are held once a week.
ANGER MANAGEMENT (THE PATHWAYS TO PEACE)	To provide healthy, constructive ways to control, manage, and overcome anger by identifying triggers and constructive communication.	Meetings are held once a week.
SEEDS OF TRUTH BIBLE STUDIES (Published by End Times Like These Ministries, INC. Moorpark, CA.)	To introduce/reintroduce/expand each participant's knowledge of Jesus Christ, His love for them, and the help He provides through His mercy and grace for all.	Meetings are held twice a week.
LIFE SKILLS TRAINING (Various resources used, including NEWSTART, Diabetes UNDONE, Creation Health, Unhooked, etc.)	To provide training, support, and resources geared to participants' needs as they re-enter society. They include: smoking cessation, health, wellness and nutrition, money management, job readiness skills development, and use of community resources.	Individualized and group sessions scheduled as needed.



Here is another way to look at building a schedule for reentry. Below are two sample weeks from The Omega House, a Seventh-day Adventist Transitional House. The Omega House residents are required to spend their first 45 days after release focusing on their personal stability, then they can begin employment. Because of this, the first schedule is full of programming. In the next, you will see the work on the schedule.

Of course, employment schedules can vary depending on the profession, for example day versus night shifts. Your programs schedule needs to be flexible enough to accommodate various circumstances.

Here is a sample schedule for a returning citizen **who is not** yet employed:

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH
8:00am Morning Worship Chores	8:00am Morning Worship Chores	8:00am Morning Worship Chores	8:00am Morning Worship Chores	8:00am Morning Worship Chores	8:00am Morning Worship Chores	9:00am Sabbath School 11:00 – 3:00pm Church, etc.
Homework	10 – 12pm Stepping Up: A Call to Courageous Manhood	1 – 3pm Genesis Process: Faster Scale	10 – 12pm The Pathways to Peace (Anger Management) 1:30 – 2:30pm Meditation / Prayer	1:30 – 3pm Health & Wellness (Nutrition, Smoking Cessation)	10 – 3pm Sabbath Prep. Community Service	Rest 3ABN Good News TV HOPE TV
12:00pm Community Service Project	6 – 8pm FASTER Scale	6:30pm Journey to Wholeness (12 Step Program)	3:00pm One-on-One Counseling	6:00pm Journey to Wholeness (12 Step Program)	6:30pm Bible Study Family Visits	Game Night Free Time Family Visits Etc.

NOTE: **Class attendance is mandatory.** Social service medical/dental appointments, etc., are to be scheduled outside of class times.

No outside work is permitted without successful completion of 45 days in the program. All work hours must be performed Sunday through Friday and must not interfere with required evening recovery and rebuilding classes.



Here is a sample schedule for a returning citizen **who is** employed

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH
8:00am Morning Worship Chores	6:00am Morning Worship Chores	6:00am Morning Worship Chores	6:00am Morning Worship Chores	6:00am Morning Worship Chores	6:00am Morning Worship Chores	9:00am Sabbath School 11:00 – 3:00pm Church, etc.
Work Homework	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work 5:00pm Sabbath Prep	Rest 3ABN Good News TV HOPE TV
12:00pm Community Service Project	6 – 8pm Journey to Wholeness (12 Step Program)	6:30pm The Genesis Process: FASTER Scale	6 – 7pm Prayer Meeting	6:00pm Health & Wellness (Nutrition, Smoking Cessation, Stepping Up)	6:30pm Bible Study Family Visits	Game Night Free Time Family Visits Etc.
7:00pm Free Time Life Skills, Job Readiness	Homework	7:30pm Bible Study	7 – 7:45pm One-on-One Counseling			
NOTE: This schedule is for those who have acquired approved employment.						

