Appendix E: Building a Communication Plan

This appendix provides your local reentry coalition with a blueprint for a robust communication plan to help achieve the goals of your reentry strategy.

Sample Talking Points

Establishing a core set of talking points will equip your local reentry coalition and its messengers to articulate a problem statement, capture how your work can help combat the problem, and maintain consistency across various forms of communication. Customize the sample talking points below to fit the particulars of your community and your coalition's reentry priorities, goals, and action steps. These talking points can then be used by members of your coalition and messengers from the community to help advance policy, practice, and funding changes.

How to Explain Reentry

Reentry is the process of returning to one's community from prison or jail. For years, success in reentry was narrowly defined as staying out of prison or jail.

But we now know that reentry is more than that: reentry is reuniting families, eliminating barriers to employment, finding stable housing, and much more.

Only by addressing all of the factors that contribute to successful reentry can we enable a safe and healthy transition from prison or jail to the community.

To realize this vision, we need everyone—from jail administrators to business leaders, mental health professionals, and community members—to come together.

The Reentry Population

Two decades ago, communities in [*insert state*] were building more and more prisons and jails, resigned to the assumption that we could do little more than incapacitate a person under correctional supervision.

Today, government agencies and their community-based partners are employing strategies to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. They recognize that pursuing anything short of this objective compromises public safety and wastes taxpayer dollars.

Despite this progress, millions of people return to their communities from prison and jail each year. When they do, they face a harsh reality.

Finding housing can be extremely difficult, the job market is largely unwelcoming to people with criminal records, conditions of community supervision can be overwhelming, and it is often challenging to reconnect with family members and friends.

The proportion of people with behavioral health needs in the criminal justice system is much higher than it is in the general public.[ii]

Education,[iii] literacy,[iv] and numeracy[v] levels tend to be lower on average for incarcerated people than they are for the general population, and access to education in prisons and jails can be limited.[vi]

The existence of a criminal record reduces the likelihood of an employer calling an applicant back for an interview by 50 percent on average, rising to 60 percent for black male job candidates with a criminal record.[vii]

People who have been incarcerated earn 40 percent less annually than they had earned prior to incarceration.[viii]

[*Add specific talking points about the reentry population in your community.*]

Impact on the Community

The ripple effects of reentry challenges are not limited to people who have been in prison and jail.

Reentry touches the whole community, from police officers to business leaders to educators.

When the reentry population is positioned to succeed, the entire community is better off.

Successful reentry leads to less crime, saves taxpayer dollars, and benefits the well-being of families and the community as a whole.

[*Add information about how your community specifically could benefit from an improved reentry process. Cite local corrections costs, data about violations of probation and parole, how many people incarcerated in your community are parents of young children, etc.*]

Messengers

Your strategic messaging is only as good as its messengers. Ideally, your local reentry coalition should assemble a group of spokespeople who represent a variety of different perspectives and can speak to your talking points through the lens of their own experiences. Use this chart to take stock of your coalition's messengers—the

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[ii] Blandford, Alex M., and Fred Osher, *Guidelines for the Successful Transition of People with Behavioral Health Disorders from Jail and Prison* (New York: CSG Justice Center, 2013); and Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016).

[iii] Bobby D. Rampey et al., *Highlights from the U.S. PIAAC Survey of Incarcerated Adults: Their Skills, Work Experience, Education, and Training* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2016), 5, table 1.1, https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016040.pdf. Note that the PIAAC survey is of people incarcerated in state and federal prisons.

[iv] Rampey et al., *Highlights from the U.S. PIAAC Survey of Incarcerated Adults*, 6, table 1.2.

[v] Rampey et al., *Highlights from the U.S. PIAAC Survey of Incarcerated Adults*, 7, table 1.3.

[vi] Gorgol, Laura E., and Brian A. Sponsler, *Unlocking Potential: Results of a National Survey of Postsecondary Education in State Prisons* (Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2011), 3, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521128.pdf.

[vii] Devah Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record," *American Journal of Sociology* 108, no. 5 (2003): 937–975.

[viii] The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Collateral Costs: Incarceration's Effect on Economic Mobility* (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010).

champions and spokespeople who can advocate to decision makers and community members about various proposed policy, practice, and funding changes.

Name	Organization/Expertise/Experience	Political Affiliation (if known)

Communication Tactics

Use this chart to strategically plot out communication tactics, what they aim to achieve, and whom they target and when. Tactics are organized into the following categories: direct outreach, education and awareness building, in-person meetings and visits, and social media campaigns.

Tactic	Objective	Target Readership/Audience	Timing
Direct outreach (e.g., phone calls, petitions)			
Education and awareness building (e.g., fact sheets, infographics)			
In-person meetings and visits (e.g., town hall meetings, visits to elected officials)			

Tactic	Objective	Target Readership/Audience	Timing
Social media campaigns (e.g., organized Twitter chats, scheduled Facebook posts)			

Use the following chart to flesh out ideas for traditional media outreach, including pitching stories to news outlets, preparing press releases, developing op-eds, and writing letters to newspaper editors.

Traditional Media Outreach				
News Stories				
What is the topic?	**What makes it relevant and timely?**	**Which outlets or reporters are you targeting?**	**When is the target release date?**	
Press Releases				
What news are you sharing?	**What makes it relevant and timely?**	**Which outlets or reporters will you send it to?**	**When is the target release date?**	
Op-Eds				
What is the main argument of this piece?	**What makes it relevant and timely?**	**Who is the author(s) and why?**	**What is the target outlet?**	**When is the target release date?**

Traditional Media Outreach				
Letters to the Editor				
What is the main argument of this piece?	**What makes it relevant and timely?**	**What motivates the author to speak on this issue?**	**What is the target outlet?**	**When is the target submission date?**