

THE SECOND CHANCE ACT

The Second Chance Act (P.L. 110-199) was signed into law on April 9, 2008. The bill received bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress and from a broad spectrum of leaders representing state and local government, law enforcement, corrections, courts, service providers and community organizations.

The Second Chance Act is an investment in programs proven to reduce recidivism and the financial burden of corrections on state and local governments, while increasing public safety. The bill authorizes \$165 million in grants to state and local government agencies and community organizations to provide employment and housing assistance, substance abuse treatment, family programming, mentoring, victim support and other services that help people returning from prison and jail avoid criminal activity and succeed in their communities.

Reentry has major implications for both public safety and government spending. With the exception of healthcare, spending on corrections has increased faster than any other item in state budgets.ⁱ Despite this increased investment, the likelihood of a person released from prison or jail succeeding in the community has not improved. Approximately two out of every three people released from prison in the US are re-arrested within three years of their release.ⁱⁱ Ensuring successful reentry means both safer communities and improved use of taxpayer dollars. The Second Chance Act will inject needed resources into state and local governments to ensure that precious resources and taxpayer investments are being best used to make prisoner reentry safer and more successful.

Second Chance Act Grantees

- In Maryland, the Baltimore City Health Department received a Second Chance Act demonstration grant to expand the Violence Prevention Initiative, which targets youth who are at the highest risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. Second Chance funds will provide enhanced case management and case planning services to Baltimore youth while they are in placement, as well as increased monitoring and support for youth and their families following release. Participants will be required to participate in a juvenile reentry court, where they must appear every month for a case conference.
- In West Virginia, Kanawha Institute for Social Research & Action (KISRA) received a Second Chance Act mentoring grant to assist adults returning to Kanawha and Cabell Counties from the West Virginia Department of Corrections. In addition to mentoring services, KISRA will provide program participants with workforce readiness training (including GED preparation, computer and internet basics, and financial literacy), job placement, and support services (including case management, parenting, substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, and transportation assistance).
- In Virginia, OAR of Fairfax County received a Second Chance Act mentoring grant to assist adults returning from the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center. In collaboration with the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office and the local Probation and Parole Office, OAR will provide mentoring, education, job training, and housing services.
- The Wisconsin Department of Corrections received a Second Chance Act demonstration grant to provide services to adults returning to the Green Bay and Milwaukee areas who have been assessed as high-risk. Second Chance funds will be used to establish one-stop centers where program participants will meet with community corrections officers and case workers and access supportive services.

Federal and state corrections facilities held over 1.6 million prisoners at the end of 2008—one in every 198 U.S. residents.

More than 9 million individuals are released from jail each year.

At least 95 percent of state prisoners will be released back to their communities at some point.

More than 735,000 individuals were released from state and federal prisons in 2008, an increase of 20 percent from 2000.

More than 5 million individuals were on probation or parole at the end of 2008.

In a study of 15 states, more than two-thirds of state prisoners released in 1994 were re-arrested and more than half returned to prison within three years of their release.

*The Bureau of Justice Statistics,
U.S. Department of Justice*

Reentry Challenges

Mental health—The incidence of serious mental illnesses is two to four times higher among prisoners than it is in the general population.ⁱⁱⁱ

Substance use disorders—Three quarters of those returning from prison have a history of substance use disorders. Over 70 percent of prisoners with serious mental illnesses also have a substance use disorder.^{iv}

Housing and homelessness—More than 10 percent of those entering prisons and jails are homeless in the months before their incarceration. For those with mental illness, the rates are even higher—about 20 percent.

Physical health—The prevalence of chronic illnesses and communicable diseases is far greater among people in jails and prisons.^v In 1997, individuals released from prison or jail accounted for nearly one-quarter of all people living with HIV or AIDS, almost one-third of those diagnosed with hepatitis C, and more than one-third of those diagnosed with tuberculosis.^{vi}

Education—Two out of every five prisoners and jail inmates lack a high school diploma or its equivalent.^{vii}

Employment—Employment rates and earnings histories of people in prisons and jails are often low before incarceration as a result of limited education experiences, low skill levels, and the prevalence of physical and mental health problems; incarceration only exacerbates these challenges.^{viii}

Children and families— Approximately 2 million U.S. children are estimated to have parents who are currently incarcerated, and more than 10 million minor children have parents who have come under some form of criminal justice supervision at some point in their children’s lives.^{ix}

Key Provisions of the Second Chance Act

Demonstration Grants—The Second Chance Act provides grants to state, local and tribal governments to promote the safe and successful reintegration into the community of individuals who have been incarcerated. Funds may be used to provide employment services, substance abuse treatment, housing, family programming, mentoring, victims services, and to improve release and revocation decisions using risk-assessment tools.

Mentoring Grants—The Second Chance Act provides grants to nonprofit organizations that may be used for mentoring individuals who have been incarcerated or offering transitional services for reintegration into the community.

Federal Reentry Initiative—The Second Chance Act provides guidance to the Bureau of Prisons for enhanced reentry planning procedures.

Reentry Research—The Second Chance Act authorizes the U.S. Justice Department’s National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics to conduct reentry-related research.

National Reentry Resource Center—The Second Chance Act establishes a national resource center to collect and disseminate best practices and to provide training on and support for reentry efforts. More information about the National Reentry Resource Center is available at www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org.

Funding Status

Congress provided \$25 million for Second Chance Act programs in fiscal year 2009 and \$100 million in fiscal year 2010. President Obama requested \$100 million for Second Chance Act programs in his FY2011 budget.

	Budget Request	Senate CJS	House CJS	Final
FY 2009	---	\$20 million	\$45 million	\$25 million
FY 2010	\$100 million	\$50 million	\$100 million	\$100 million
FY 2011	\$100 million			

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ⁱ Piehl, A. *From Cell to Street: A Plan to Supervise Inmates After Release*. Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth, 2002; Hughes, T. & D.J. Wilson. “Reentry Trends in the United States.” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d. www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry/learn.html, accessed May 13, 2004.

ⁱⁱ Langan, P. & D. Levin. *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002. www.ojp.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/rpr94.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hammett, T., C. Roberts & S. Kennedy. “Health-Related Issues in Prisoner Reentry.” *Crime & Delinquency* 47, no. 3 (2001): 390-409.

^{iv} Hammett, Roberts & Kennedy, 2001.

^v National Commission on Correctional Health Care. *The Health Status of Soon-To-Be-Released Prisoners: A Report to Congress*, vol. 1. Chicago: National Commission on Correction Health Care, 2002. www.ncchc.org/pubs/pubs_stbr.html.

^{vi} Hammett, Roberts & Kennedy, 2001.

^{vii} Harlow, C.W. *Education and Correctional Populations*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003. www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ecp.pdf.

^{viii} Holzer, H., S. Raphael & M. Stoll. *Employment Barriers Facing Ex-Offenders*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2003. www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410855_holzer.pdf.

^{ix} Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Children with Incarcerated Parents.” Baltimore, MD: Author, n.d. www.aecf.org/OurWork/SpecialInterestAreas/ChildrenWithIncarceratedParents.aspx, accessed February 2, 2009.