

What is a Reentry Simulation?



A Reentry Simulation is an educational outreach event which highlights the struggles and challenges faced by individuals who are transitioning from incarceration back into their communities.

It provides an opportunity for participants to gain an understanding of the significant obstacles and barriers faced by men and women upon their release from incarceration and return to their communities.

Each participant assumes the identity of a reentrant and receives a packet of materials, including a “Life Card.” The “Life Card” explains the reentrant’s criminal background, current living situation, current job situation, and the specific weekly tasks that must be accomplished in order to avoid the risk of being sent back to jail for non-compliance with the requirements of his or her supervised release. The simulation begins with an explanation and instructions from the facilitator. The “Reentrants” then set out to navigate the challenges of reentry.

The room is set up with approximately 15 stations. Each station represents the many places a returning citizen must navigate when they are first released. Each table has random elements which produce real life uncertainty when dealing with each of these agencies and organizations. Some of the stations include Identification, Probation, Court, Education, Bank, Employer, Social Services, Church, Pawn Shop, Landlord/Rent, Transportation, Health Clinic, and Substance Use Treatment.

Over the course of about an hour, participants experience the first month of post-release life. Each week is simulated in a 15-minute segment. In between each of these segments, Reentrants are required to complete a probation check in, and depending on how successful they were in satisfying the conditions of their release and accomplishing their assigned tasks, the Reentrants are either remanded to jail, or returned to their assigned housing.

Successful Reentry into the community is something that is difficult. It is a complex process since each person has different individual needs, resources, and histories, each person's life path is different. Successful Reentry is not something that happens automatically upon release from prison but is something which has a greater chance of occurring if planned for accordingly.

The Reentry Simulation provides visibility into the perspectives of the returning citizens who those in many different fields are tasked to help. Our aim is to represent a realistic landscape of what individuals face when coming home. By experiencing these complex obstacles and barriers which reentrants must navigate, we not only gain visibility into their individual perspective but also discover innovative ways to help them succeed and build healthier, safer communities.