

Here is a quote from the new **SRG** book *Purposeful Neighboring: Creating Reentry-Ready Communities*:

I have been pleasantly surprised by a recent development in community-based prisoner reentry that I call the “Library Solution.” Public libraries have been embracing the needs of returning citizens with innovative services. From computer, Internet, and email access (including teaching those that have been locked away for a while how to set up and use their email!) to seminars on employment strategies for disadvantaged workers, local libraries have been getting involved. This is a great trend that I hope will spread everywhere! To enhance your local coalition, be sure to invite your local library.

For more information, reference *Public and Prison Libraries: Important, Often Overlooked, Partners In Reentry* at www.corrections.com.

Let us expand on this concept and look at various libraries that can be leveraged in the Prisoner Reentry Reformation:

1. PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- a. Access: As mentioned above, public libraries provide returning citizens access to the Internet, computer resources, email services, and email instruction, all for free.
- b. Literacy: Literacy is a big piece of breaking the recidivism cycle, as it is the foundation of education, one of the critical success factors in rehabilitation. If you are developing a reentry program or applying for a reentry grant, consider including the public library in your area as a key partner. They often have literacy programs available, and know about other literacy resources in your community.
- c. Community Education: Some public libraries are hosting seminars on employment and other topics pertinent to reentry. This should be encouraged and expanded.
- d. Possible Barrier: Most libraries require the returning citizen to have a library card in order to access the computers and other services, yet they block homeless people with no permanent address from getting a card. Be sure you know the policy for your local library and advocate for change if it is a barrier to reentry.

2. PRISON LIBRARIES

Public libraries are partnering with prison libraries to make sure that they have the resources they need to serve the inmate population. Encourage your local library to build a bridge to the library in the nearest prison. If that prison does not have a library, then that might be a good project as well. In addition, the prison library is an excellent place to sponsor a reentry kiosk or a reentry club for that prison.

3. PRISON LAW LIBRARIES

Most prisons have law libraries that are staffed by inmate law clerks (supervised by a staff member, of course). Every prison law library should have literature available to encourage reentry awareness, access to resources, etc.

4. COLLEGE LIBRARIES

The local college library can be a valuable resource in much the same way as the public library. Also, a college education can be a vital tool in rehabilitation and the library can be a great place to make that first contact with the local college.