

# Leveraging Technology to Support Prisoner Reentry

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The transition from prisons or jails back into the community can be challenging, and many returning citizens reengage with the criminal justice system. Preparing incarcerated individuals for successful reintegration is a critical mission of corrections agencies and their community-based partners. To accomplish this goal, the corrections sector is increasingly leveraging technology-based solutions to deliver reentry programs, supervision, and support services in ways that may ultimately improve outcomes.

In this report, researchers describe a virtual workshop, convened in March 2021 by the RAND Corporation and the University of Denver on behalf of the National

Institute of Justice. A group of prison, jail, and probation and parole administrators; community-based service providers; researchers; and other experts was convened to identify and prioritize 11 high-priority needs to address this issue.

Successful reentry can be achieved only if these and other needs are addressed. Additionally, returning citizens on community supervision must comply with their conditions of release. Therefore, in addition to addressing the needs of returning citizens, the sector has the obligation to protect the public by monitoring compliance with these conditions and ensuring accountability.

## Key Findings

### **The use of electronic devices by incarcerated individuals has the potential to support reentry objectives**

- Technology can be leveraged to better prepare those in custody for future job opportunities.
- Technology offers the opportunity to leverage communication tools (video- or web-based) to deliver reentry-related services remotely.
- Virtual reality (VR) and/or other simulation technology can be an effective tool to support reentry.
- Technology can play an important role in correctional education.
- Families are an important influence in the reentry process, and technology can facilitate support for incarcerated individuals and the families to whom they are returning.
- Telepresence technology can facilitate warm hand-offs to community-based partners (e.g., community supervision staff, service providers, government benefits agencies, employers).

### **Correctional agencies face several types of challenges in implementing technology**

- It can be challenging for agencies to obtain or create appropriate VR or simulation content.
- It can be challenging to provide incarcerated individuals with the identification they will need upon release.
- Reentry efforts and continuity-of-care objectives are hindered by a lack of coordination, collaboration, and information-sharing among the stakeholders (e.g., courts, corrections agencies, state and local support agencies, nongovernmental organizations).
- Technology to support reentry can be much more effective when it is designed and implemented with inclusivity in mind.

## Recommendations

- Develop implementation guides and best practices for using electronic devices that consider agency objectives, the pros and cons of different funding models, and security issues.
- Develop and share case studies, best practices, and effective strategies for using technology to train individuals for high-demand jobs.
- Research the efficacy, advantages, and disadvantages of telepresence-enabled service delivery, and give facilitators and providers guidance on effective techniques.
- Develop pilot programs and perform evaluation research to identify (1) best practices for content development and implementation and (2) the impacts of VR or simulation on key outcomes.
- Explore the feasibility of developing a publicly funded, national repository of corrections-specific VR content that is accessible to agencies at no or low cost.
- Research the impacts of technology-facilitated educational delivery models on

key outcomes.

- Develop best practices and strategies for connecting relevant agencies so that institutions can apply for and secure identification for individuals prior to their release.
- Develop best practices and effective strategies to fully leverage interactive technologies to support family reunification while mitigating security risks.
- Develop effective strategies for technology-facilitated in-reach and document the benefits.
- Develop implementation guides that highlight strategies for obtaining funding to establish model automated solutions to support coordinated reentry case management across partners. These solutions could allow partner access to essential information, including assessments, case plans, contacts or interactions, program referrals, progress in programming or supervision, status, and outcomes.
- Develop best practices and effective strategies for ensuring inclusivity; these strategies should account for diversity among both service providers and the target population.

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