



Home for Good: 5 Year Retrospective

October 2020



The Philadelphia Reentry Coalition increases communication, facilitates collaboration, and builds capacity to create a stronger reentry support network for Philadelphia's returning citizens. The Coalition's 115 member organizations include community-based organizations, service providers, researchers, advocates, returning citizens, faith-based groups, and local, state, and federal government agencies.

Background

The Philadelphia Reentry Coalition was formed in 2012. [Home for Good](#) is the Philadelphia Reentry Coalition's 5-year countywide collective action plan to improve reentry in Philadelphia, the product of a 6-month strategic planning process the Coalition went through in 2015. The Home for Good plan, which spans 2016-2020, was developed by more than a hundred stakeholders. Home for Good reflects Coalition members' shared vision that every person released from jail or prison to Philadelphia succeeds and is a productive member of the community. The Reentry Coalition agreed to collaborate, coordinate, and communicate to create opportunities for successful reentry using evidence-based practices, to reduce and ultimately eliminate recidivism. Home for Good strived for the ambitious goal of reducing recidivism in Philadelphia by 25%.

As the original timeline for Home for Good nears its end, the Coalition is currently undergoing a strategic planning process to re-evaluate its structure, governance, and membership framework, update our bylaws, and develop a new 2-year strategic plan to begin in 2021.

All photos by the Philadelphia Reentry Think Tank



Growth

35% Increase in Membership

Since Home for Good launched, the Coalition has grown from 85 to 115 organizational members.

Building a Backbone to Support the Coalition

Since 2015, the Reentry Coalition staff has grown from a single part-time coordinator, to a full-time coordinator, two AmeriCorps VISTAs, and significant support and involvement from senior staff in the City's Office of Reentry Partnerships.

Reentry Month

In 2017 the City of Philadelphia recognized June as Reentry Awareness Month. With the exception of 2020 due to the pandemic, each year since, the Coalition has organized a month full of events designed to raise awareness about reentry in Philadelphia, and to promote the well-being of returning citizens. Reentry Month activities include a variety of events organized by Coalition members, and an annual Reentry Celebration and Award Ceremony that has honored many incredible organizations and almost a hundred Philadelphians who have overcome reentry barriers for their individual accomplishments.



Increasing Communication

Stakeholder Meetings

Over the past five years, the Coalition made it a priority to gather the whole coalition together two to four times a year. These meetings, each attended by 100-200 people, served as a unique opportunity for individuals and organizations in the reentry field to get updates from each other, hear about new initiatives, and network with existing and new partners.

Enhancing Engagement Online

Website: Launched a dynamic website in 2016, which we have repeatedly updated since, to make more useful to Reentry Coalition members and the public. Over the course of Home for Good, we shared over 1300 posts to both our website and newsletter. Since its launch, viewership has tripled; increasing from 1,100 visits per month in 2016 to 3,800 in 2020.

Newsletter: Shared news, resources, announcements, partnership updates, funding and professional development opportunities, jobs and volunteer needs, and member highlights via a regular, bi-weekly newsletter. Over the course of Home for Good, we sent 137 editions and readership increased 225%, to almost 600 subscribers.

Sharing Critical Info During COVID-19

During the pandemic, the Coalition has served as a vital information hub for organizations providing reentry support in Philadelphia. During the first two months, PRC published 15 in-depth status updates on the services of members. PRC later created the [Centralized Reentry Information Database](#), a catalogue of information on critical services currently available.



Fostering Collaboration

Launch of the City of Philadelphia's Office of Reentry Partnerships

In August 2019, Mayor Kenney formed the [Office of Reentry Partnerships](#) (ORP) to elevate and organize citywide reentry efforts. ORP was launched with a heavy focus on partnerships, including working with City departments to take a holistic approach to reentry services, and a specific commitment to bolstering support for the Philadelphia Reentry Coalition. Since then, ORP has worked closely with the leadership of the Reentry Coalition, sponsored the strategic planning process the Coalition is currently undergoing, and created a permanent Coalition Coordinator staff position. ORP senior staff is heavily invested in continuing to work with the Reentry Coalition to collaborate around a shared strategy to achieve measurable improvements in reentry outcomes citywide.

Stakeholder Showcases

The Coalition designed a creative meeting format to spotlight member organizations and programs that enabled Coalition members without previous knowledge of each other to establish relationships. In total, the Coalition spotlighted 32 organizations during three Stakeholder Showcases attended by over 200 representatives of member organizations.

Subcommittees Highlights

Data and Metrics:

- Assisted in the development and completion of the Unified Recidivism and Reentry Landscape research projects, published in 2018 and 2019.
- Supported the Coalition's efforts to educate member organizations about leveraging data and metrics to improve program outcomes and support fundraising efforts.
- Organized a training on facilitating more academic-practitioner partnership with the goals of building the capacity of reentry programs and contributing to research on reentry.

Employment

- Fostered a very engaged community of practice among subcommittee members in acting as a platform for networking, relationship-deepening, peer problem-solving, and professional development/training opportunities for local organizations providing employment-related services to returning citizens.
- Strategized continually about better aligning and strengthening assessment, program-matching and referral processes for reentry employment services.
- Provided input to the City's Office of Workforce Development to inform the citywide workforce development strategy, *Fueling Philadelphia's Talent Engine*.

Juvenile Life Without Parole Temporary Working Group

- Brought over 50 groups together to leverage resources and identify priorities to support those returning home as a result of the *Montgomery v. Louisiana* US Supreme Court Case in 2016. In 2016, there were approximately 520 people in Pennsylvania – over 300 from Philadelphia alone - serving life without parole sentences for crimes committed as juveniles –the most of any U.S. jurisdiction. Hundreds of Philadelphians have been released from prison as a result of resentencing.
- Informed a set of formal recommendations for changing parole restrictions imposed on former Juvenile Lifers, which were shared with state agency leadership.
- Helped inform the development of the [JLWOP Reentry Navigator](#), an interactive tool created by the Youth Sentencing & Reentry Project.

Health

- Brought in speakers to educate members about initiatives or topics that different partners were working on or wanted to know more about, such as the health services at the Philadelphia Department of Prisons, how the trauma of incarceration affects reentry, and Philadelphia's Federally Qualified Health Centers.

Housing

- Provided a space for stakeholders to share information about housing services being provided by public agencies as well as nonprofit service providers.
- Created the [Navigating Housing Resources Guide](#).

- Developed preliminary strategies around landlord engagement and efforts to increase returning citizens' access to secure, stable, and affordable housing in Philadelphia.

Funding

- Developed a formal way for the Reentry Coalition to support member organizations' grant applications, provided 17 letters of support to demonstrate members' commitment to collaboration.
- Opened discussion about opportunities to facilitate more open dialogue about funding, including how competition between providers can interrupt necessary collaboration, and challenges grassroots organizations face in obtaining resources.

Education

- Worked together to workshop different program models to strengthen service delivery and increase returning citizens' access to education.

Community Engagement

- Surveyed formerly incarcerated leaders doing local reentry work to ensure the Reentry Coalition properly elevates the voices and power of those who are most impacted.
- Helped the Reentry Coalition successfully advocate for Philadelphia City Council and the Mayor to officially recognize June as Reentry Awareness Month annually, and plan Reentry Month activities 2017-2019, including two Annual Reentry Celebration and Award Ceremonies.
- Partnered consistently with the Reentry Think Tank, an organization that connects returning citizens with artists and advocates and drives reentry solutions by those in reentry.

Reentry Think Tank Project

Over the course of Home for Good, the Reentry Coalition has had the opportunity to work in close partnership with the Reentry Think Tank, which launched in the fall of 2016. The Think Tank creates powerful visual and multimedia posters, portraits, videos, and poetry that center the experiences of people who have lived reentry. The Think Tank opens conversations about reentry needs and returning citizens' rights, giving people concrete tools to help tell their stories and demand a larger audience, and ultimately mobilizing all those who interact with these different mediums to find their place in the collective movement to make sure that returning citizens, their families, and their communities can thrive. By working with the Reentry Think Tank, the Reentry Coalition has been able to start focusing on building a citywide commitment to centering returning citizens, to shift the culture of reentry programs to value the expertise and experience of returning citizens.



Building Capacity

Major Research Projects

[Philadelphia Reentry Services Landscape Report \(2019\)](#)

A comprehensive survey of almost 120 programs that serve people with criminal justice system involvement co-authored by the Coalition and the Temple University's Department of Criminal Justice. The report reflects our strategic objectives of increasing the availability of data about reentry in Philadelphia and allocating resources to better match services to needs. The report affirmed that Philadelphia has a solid foundation of cross collaborative efforts to build upon, but that there is a need for continued alignment of fragmented and siloed efforts in order to fill crucial gaps. Key findings include:

- 1) Philadelphia has a solid foundation of reentry services and cross-sector collaboration to build on.**
 - Many reentry and related programs are collectively serving tens of thousands of people annually.
 - Existing untapped capacity could serve more people.
 - Wide-ranging stakeholder participation in the Coalition reflects a shared commitment to aligning reentry efforts and goals.
 - Evidence of the Reentry Coalition's impact is emerging.
 - There is optimism about reentry collaboration in Philadelphia.

2) There is a clear need for continued alignment of fragmented and siloed efforts.

- The ecosystem of reentry services is made up of many small programs and small organizations.
- Current resources are mismatched with needs.
- Many programs are not formally partnered with criminal justice agencies.
- No single funder drives program alignment; reentry services are supported by multiple funding sources.

3) Practices of tracking outcomes and impact are inconsistent.

- Recidivism is frequently not tracked as a performance measure.
- Participant information is collected but frequently not stored electronically or updated regularly.
- Different types of client outcomes are not tracked equally.
- A majority of programs have never been evaluated.

4) There are significant gaps in Philadelphia’s reentry services, which we need to address and continuously assess.

- Across many domain areas, employment support services—not core education and training—are offered most frequently.
- Key basic survival resources, and some types of education, are among the least frequently offered services.
- Programs have mixed eligibility requirements.
- Many programs do not have specialized services for returning citizens or flexible hours, and almost none have childcare.
- There is a varied availability of case management across programs.
- Explicitly reentry-focused programs have more limited capacity, stricter eligibility, more services specialized by gender, but no specialized services for LGBTQ community.

5) We see many opportunities to offer a stronger network of supports to people coming home – and break the cycle of recidivism— by working together.

- Reentry Coalition member organizations suggested numerous ways that the Coalition could improve reentry outcomes by deepening collaboration to help reentry programs achieve greater impact both individually and collectively.

[Calculating a Unified Recidivism Rate for Philadelphia & 2015 Recidivism Open Data](#)

The Reentry Coalition wanted to be able to analyze a unified recidivism rate that would correspond to Philadelphians returning from incarceration regardless of whether they were in county, state, or federal jails and prisons. To track recidivism the Coalition analyzed one-year re-arrest rates and basic demographic data for people released by the Philadelphia Department of Prisons or the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections to Philadelphia from 2012-2015.

Key findings include:

- 1) In 2015, approximately 25,000 people returned to Philadelphia from incarceration at least once each year. Of those, roughly 80% were from released from the Philadelphia Department of Prisons, 18% were released from the PA Department of Corrections, and 2% were released from federal custody.
- 2) The one-year unified recidivism rate for people returning to Philadelphia was 33.9%, meaning that of the 24,089 people released to Philadelphia from Philadelphia Department of Prisons and Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, roughly 8,000 people were re-arrested within a year of their return to the community, and 16,000 were not.

Resource Guides and Short Materials

- [Women and Reentry \(2017\)](#): An analysis of national and local data pertaining to women's experiences and needs within the justice system. Also served to spotlight coalition members who work to support women with justice involvement.
- [Housing Resources Guide \(2019\)](#): Produced in collaboration with the Housing Subcommittee, this guide is meant to help simplify some of the information about existing publicly funded housing resources relevant to someone with a criminal record who is looking for housing.
- [COVID Centralized Reentry Information Database \(2020\)](#): A comprehensive database developed during the pandemic that includes info about reentry support, Coalition members' services, benefits, housing, the courts, basic needs, and other services and resources. We've continued to maintain the database throughout the pandemic.

Trainings and Other Professional Development Opportunities

The Coalition hosted over 20 trainings cumulatively attended by over 600 people, to expand the knowledge and capacity of our members. All training subjects were chosen by our members or informed directly by their feedback. Topics included:

Basic of Risk-Needs Responsivity – 3/23/16	Traumatic Brain Injuries and Incarceration – 2/21/19
Understanding RNR Tools in Action – 5/23/16	Mental Health First Aid – 3/11/19
Reentry and Employment 101 – 9/14/16	Education Behind and Beyond the Walls – 4/11/19
Resources to Reduce Recidivism – 2/22/17	Supporting Individuals with Substance Use – 5/7/19
Reentry Grant Writing: Part 1 – 5/3/17	Financial Literacy for Returning Citizens – 6/20/19
Reentry Grant Writing: Part 2 – 5/17/17	Looking Forward: Resources for Reentry – 6/21/19
Reentry Grant Writing: Part 3 – 6/7/17	Overdose Prevention Workshop – 6/25/19
Women and Reentry – 12/8/17	Researcher Practitioner Partnerships – 8/14/19
Reentry and Employment 101 – 12/12/17	Philadelphia Municipal Government 101 – 11/20/19
Understanding RNR Tools in Action – 2/5/18	COVID-19 Financial Assistance – 5/26/20
Supporting Access to Higher Education – 5/23/18	History of Racism in Phila Justice System – 9/10/20
Recovery-Oriented System of Care – 4/3/18	Pardons Application in Pennsylvania – 10/7/20
Supporting Survivors of Partner Violence – 4/25/18	



Conclusion

As the Reentry Coalition implemented the Home for Good plan, certain strategies and priorities saw more progress than others. For example, the specific commitment to lower recidivism in Philadelphia by 25% quickly proved itself beyond the scope of the Coalition's capacity, as it took more than two years to even measure the baseline we were starting from. However, the Reentry Coalition is proud to report on the many other ways that we have collectively moved forward our shared goals, towards the shared vision of a Philadelphia that truly works together to support those coming home from jail and prison.

Over the past five years, the Coalition saw its membership increase steadily; maintained steady communication through our newsletter and website; engaged hundreds of organizations and individuals in dynamic ways to foster partnerships, collaboration, and a shared agenda; published a series of impactful research reports and data; and facilitated dozens of trainings and meetings spaces that increased the capacity of and collaboration between our members. Though there is still much work ahead, Philadelphia's solid foundation of organizations focused on reentry and cross-sector collaboration speaks to the strength of the Reentry Coalition, the dedication of our members, and the prospect of significant change on the horizon.

