

# Quick Reference

## *Leveraging Partners to Serve Returning Citizens with Disabilities*

While American Job Centers (AJC) play a crucial role in helping returning citizens with disabilities find and retain employment, they often do not work alone. Instead, many AJCs rely on partner organizations to help them meet the unique needs of these customers.

This quick reference guide is one of three resources created to help you and other partners effectively serve returning citizens with disabilities.

### Who are key partners for serving returning citizens with disabilities?

The following resources and organizations can support [AJCs](#) with offering comprehensive assistance to returning citizens with disabilities:

- ▶ [Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\) Services](#): Returning citizens with disabilities may be eligible for VR services. State and local VR programs assist with diagnosis; provide rehabilitation and counseling; and offer job training, placement, and retention support. See the [directory of state VR agencies](#).
- ▶ [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#): Connect with your local NAMI chapter to access local services, treatment, and support for returning citizens with disabilities.
- ▶ [HealthCare.gov](#): Unmet health needs may create additional barriers post-release. This resource can help AJC staff connect returning citizens with disabilities to available healthcare options.
- ▶ [National Council on Independent Living \(NCIL\)](#) and [Independent Living Research Utilization \(ILRU\)](#): Returning citizens with disabilities often experience challenges with housing and living independently. NCIL and ILRU provide assistance with addressing these barriers.

To learn more about how AJC staff can assist returning citizens with disabilities, access the quick reference guides titled **Disability Disclosure for Returning Citizens with Disabilities** and **Reasonable Accommodations for Returning Citizens with Disabilities**.

## What are some tips for effective partnership?

The following tips can help AJCs adopt a streamlined and collaborative approach when working with other providers to serve returning citizens with disabilities.

- ▶ **Streamline collaboration efforts.** AJCs work with many local and regional partner organizations that provide education, training, healthcare, and other forms of social service. Explore methods of reducing duplication and providing seamless customer-focused services, such as [Integrated Resource Teams](#).
- ▶ **Integrate service delivery.** Returning citizens with disabilities may connect with an AJC through various organizations and services. By developing shared practices across organizations, partners can integrate their services and reduce undue burden on customers.
- ▶ **Create data-informed services.** In alignment with the One Workforce approach, AJCs and their partners should share data to foster greater connectivity, reduce duplication, and lessen the burden on returning citizens with disabilities.
- ▶ **Focus on customer-centered outcomes.** Beyond organizational outcomes, effective partnerships measure progress by how well returning citizens are being served. Customer-centered performance measures help AJCs and partners determine if returning citizens with disabilities are receiving job opportunities *and* the resources they need to navigate reentry.

## As partners, how can we best navigate the pre-release period?

Partners should begin providing services to returning citizens with disabilities before their release back to communities. Focused activities and service coordination prior to release can significantly improve employment outcomes and facilitate connections to necessary accommodations after release.

[A study done by Mathematica provides insight into the potential of jail-based American Job Centers.](#) Some of the key strategies for navigating the pre-release period include the following:

- ▶ Gain buy-in by facilitating collaboration and communication between corrections and workforce agencies.
- ▶ Adapt AJC services to meet the security levels of the corrections facility.
- ▶ Partner with specialized programs to meet the needs of participants and overcome challenges.
- ▶ Expect that participants may struggle to engage after release due to competing demands.
- ▶ Build relationships with parole and probation staff as a way of engaging returning citizens with disabilities and encouraging participation in programs.

## Where can I learn more?

Visit the following resources to learn more about leveraging partners to serve returning citizens with disabilities.

- ▶ [Reentry Services Directory](#): The National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC) features a list of organizations and service providers that address reentry needs such as housing, employment, and family reunification.
- ▶ [Stepping-Up Initiative](#): This national initiative provides tools for implementing cross-system strategies to reduce the number of people with mental illness and co-occurring disorders who are currently in jails.
- ▶ [Telehealth and Telecommunication Opportunities in the Criminal Justice System](#): This resource provides an overview of how leaders in the criminal justice field are advancing the use of virtual service delivery to support people with mental illness and substance use disorders.
- ▶ [Vocational Rehabilitation and WIOA Youth Programs Collaboration Opportunities](#): This resource helps state and local workforce organizations, youth organizations, and other stakeholders develop effective collaborations to serve youth with disabilities.
- ▶ [WorkforceGPS](#): Access the [Disability and Employment Community](#) and the [Reentry Employment Opportunities Community](#) for news, tools, and resources for supporting returning citizens with disabilities.