

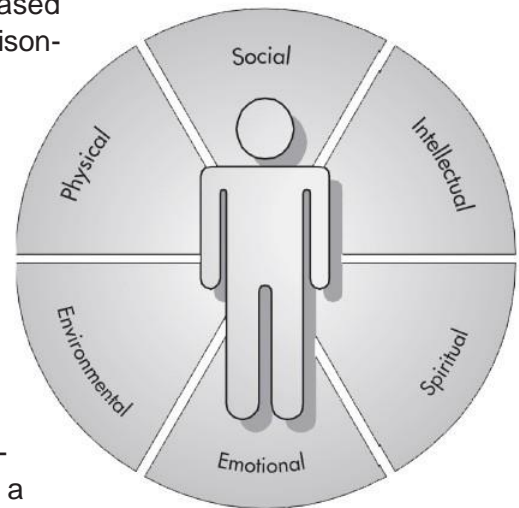
# Needs of Ex-Prisoners

Every year, approximately 700,000 men and women are released from U.S. prisons. That's the equivalent of about 2,000 ex-prisoners a day returning to communities across the country.

Going home after being in prison is a very challenging transition for most newly-released prisoners, as well as their families and communities. Recidivism studies show that without intervention, two-thirds of those released will return to prison within three years. Sadly, prisoners often go back to prison not because they committed a crime, but because they simply violated parole.

Recidivism is frequently related to medical issues and/or substance abuse. For example, a person may be diagnosed with a medical or psychiatric problem and given medication while in prison. But when released, that medical or psychiatric care is discontinued. Many resort to using alcohol or other drugs to self-medicate, thereby violating their terms of parole and eventually being rearrested.

To break this cycle, an effective reentry ministry must consider the needs in all areas of the returning citizen's life: social, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, environmental, and physical. These are the most common needs of a newly-released person returning to your community.



## Immediate Needs

- Safe housing
- Adequate food
- Clothing and personal care items
- Transportation
- A church home
- Emotional and spiritual support
- Proper identification
- Access to a phone
- Medical and dental care; psychiatric care
- Alcohol or substance-abuse treatment and rehabilitation

## Ongoing Needs

- Life-skills training and preparation
- Employment
- Income to cover ongoing expenses
- Further educational and/or vocational training
- Professional services (attorney, accountant, counselor, etc.)
- Mentoring and spiritual guidance/support
- Counseling for family and marital problems
- Strong friendships with other Christian believers

The Urban Institute in Washington, DC has conducted a long-term study on the many challenges faced by ex-prisoners when they return home. To read a summary of their findings, go to their website at <http://www.urban.org/center/jpc/returning-home/index.cfm>

Recovering from the losses and dehumanization of incarceration doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and ongoing support. The healing and restoration of ex-prisoners is most effective when it takes place among a strong body of believers who are fully committed to demonstrating Christ's love toward prodigal sons and daughters returning home.