

# Life after 20-to-Life



**LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR  
SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION  
FROM PRISON TO COMMUNITY**

“We must remember  
always that the  
doors of prisons  
swing both ways.”

Mary Belle Harris, first female prison warden in the U.S.

1 in 100

# Recidivism Reality Check

- In 2006, almost 650,000 offenders were released by state and federal prisons<sup>1</sup> and another 7 million were cycled out by local jails into communities across the nation<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Office of Justice Programs. "Reentry." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. <http://www.reentry.gov/>. (Accessed June 5, 2008.)

<sup>2</sup>National Alliance to End Homelessness. <http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/policy/focusareas/reentry> (Accessed July 1, 2008)

# Recidivism Reality Check

- 95% of prisoners return to the community within two years of incarceration.<sup>3</sup>
- 52% of offenders nationwide return to prison within 3 years - most within the first 6 months<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>MTC Institute. 2003. "Data Spotlight: Recidivism." (Accessed at <http://www.mtc trains.com/institute/publications/DS-Recidivism.pdf> on October 4, 2008)

<sup>4</sup>Langan, Patrick A., and David J. Levin. 2002. "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994." NCJ 193427. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/rpr94.pdf> (Accessed June 5, 2007.)

# Recidivism Reality Check

- Approximately one-half of prisoners released from state prisons in 2001 were released into just 35 counties California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas.<sup>4</sup>
- >10% enter or exit prison homeless<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Wheeler, Darrell P. and George Patterson. 2008. "Prisoner Reentry." Health and Social Work. (Accessed at Academic Search Premier on October 4, 2008.)

<sup>5</sup>National Alliance to End Homelessness.  
<http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/policy/focusareas/reentry>  
(Accessed July 1, 2008)

Upon release, ex-offenders from the Colorado state prison system have:

- Box of belongings
- \$100 gate "check"
- Parole support varies
- Community correction support varies
- Some have no support
- Low education

# Why should public libraries care?

- Public library values
- Community centers
- Resource for former prisoner/family
  - More than one child in 50 has an incarcerated parent
  - Children of incarcerated parents are 6 times more likely to go to prison
- Service = investment in the community



Public libraries can play an important role in the effort to reduce recidivism.

# Common Reentry Program Limitations

- Funding
- Staffing
- Not available in all facilities or communities
- Most programs in English only
- Classroom-oriented
- Specific program eligibility requirements
- Time crunch

# Library UN-Limitations

Libraries serve:

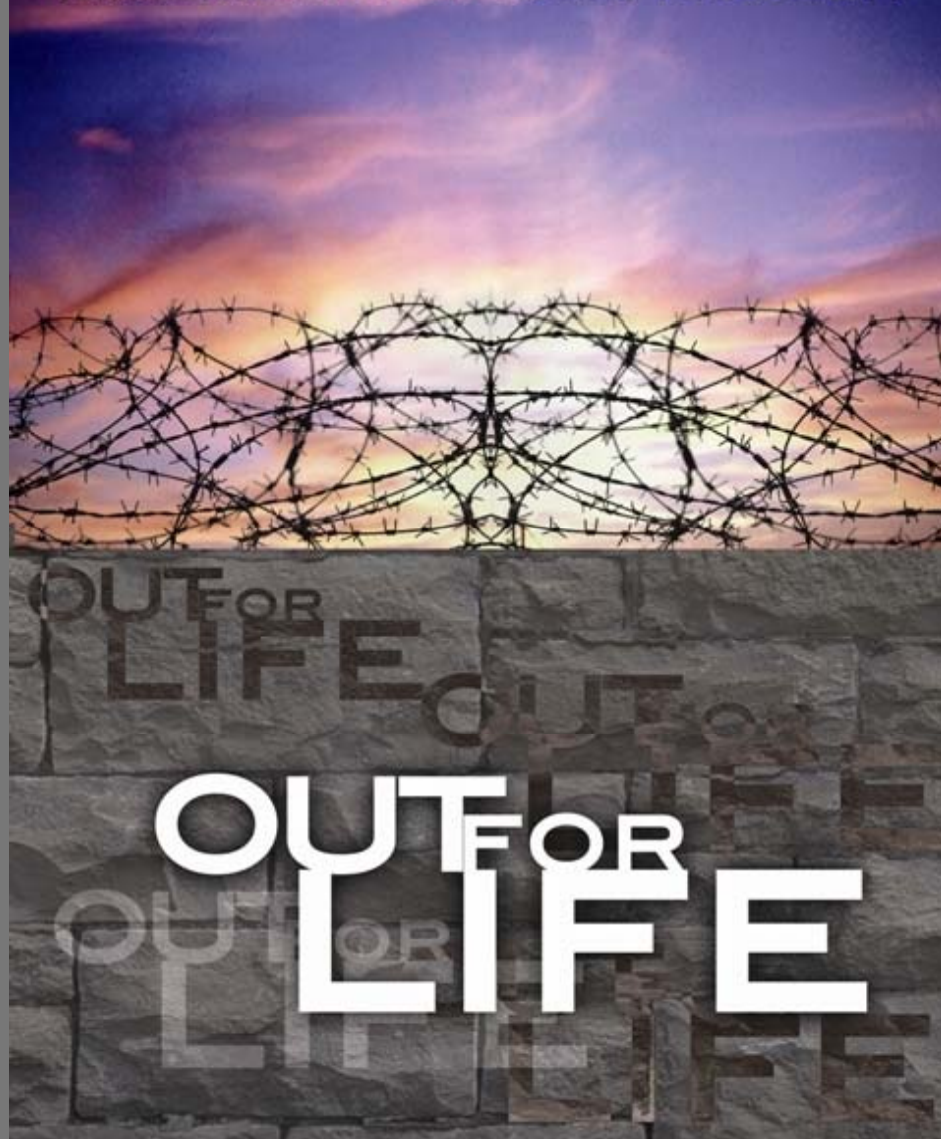
- everybody
- all ages
- all levels of English proficiency
- all reading abilities
- all security and custody levels, regardless of crime
- all communities
- information provided in variety of formats

From the day they are released, ex-offenders need:

- Housing
- Employment
- Identification papers
- Medical/mental health
- Benefits
- Treatment
- Transportation
- Clothing
- Support system

# SET NEW HORIZONS

LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR SUCCESSFUL  
TRANSITION FROM PRISON TO SOCIETY



# Colorado DOC LIBRARY Reentry Program

- Materials added to collections
- 10% annual materials budget allocated for reentry resources
- Usage statistics tracked
- Related library programs
- Instruction for offenders and staff about public library resources and programs



# Reentry Subject Areas

- Computers
- Employment
- Housing
- Transportation



# Reentry Subject Areas

- Health care
- Legal issues
- Budgeting
- Education opportunities



# Reentry Subject Areas



- Family & relationships
- Personal growth & development
- Spiritual growth & development
- Recreation

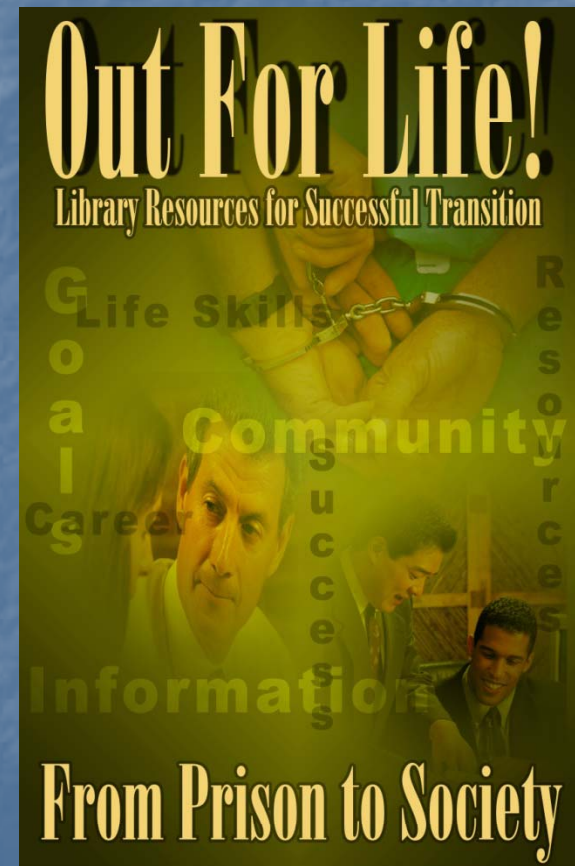
# Reentry Subject Areas



- Addiction recovery & mental health
- The challenges of developmental & physical disabilities

# Reentry Library Programs and Services

- Lists of reentry resources
- Life skills programs
- Literacy programs and classes
- Bulletin boards and displays
- Facility newsletters

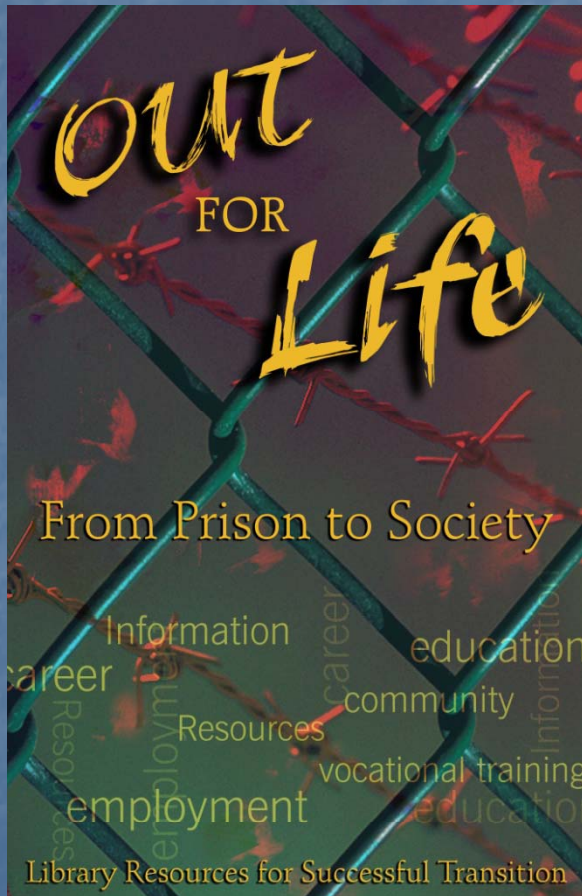


# Besides reentry information resources, public libraries provide:

- Help using the library
- Help accessing materials
- Children's and family programs
- Literacy outreach to local detention centers and correctional facilities
- Equitable service without prejudice or judgment – inclusivity!



# Be Inclusive



- Materials at lower literacy levels
- Spanish-language materials
- Materials in print, audio, and video formats

# Marketing to Former Offenders

- Drawbacks to regular methods
- Information clearinghouses
  - Parole offices
  - Churches
  - Shelters, halfway houses
  - Drug treatment centers
  - Public schools
- Broader audiences

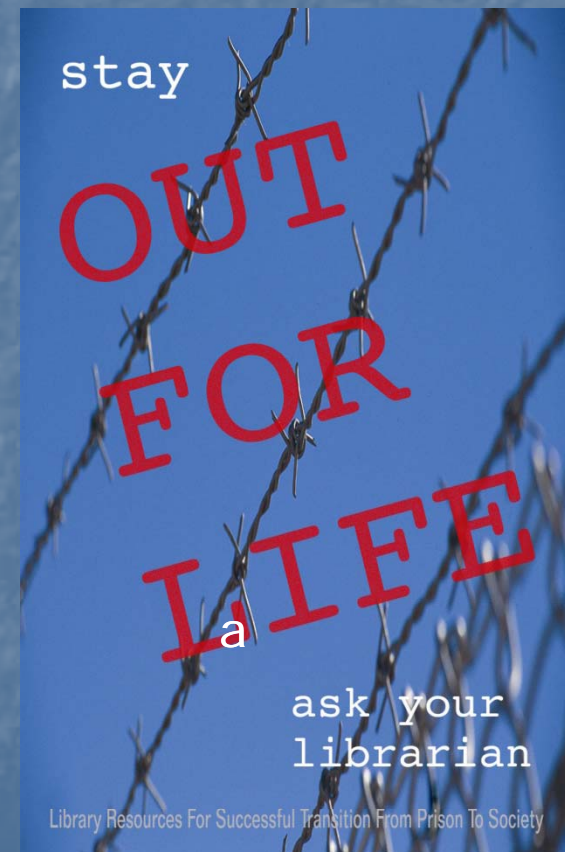
# Partnering for Success

- Two heads are better than one
- Don't reinvent the wheel
- Duplication of effort is reduced
- Reentry programs are strengthened
- Save time & money

# Continuum of library service from prison to community

*Out for Life* DVD: To let offenders know how their prison library can help them prepare for release and how libraries in the community can help them post-release.

*To request copy of this DVD,  
contact Diana Reese at  
reese\_d@cde.state.co.us*



# Correctional librarians prepare offenders to use public libraries by providing...

- information & promotional materials from community libraries
- locations & hours of community libraries
- information about public libraries' collections & program offerings

# Have YOU been to prison??

- Book talks
- Literacy programs
- Supplement collection development with donations and discards



# Have YOU been to prison??

- Invite public librarians to career fairs
- Reentry programs - teleconference between a room of offenders and public librarians
- Promote public library resources and programs

# Have YOU been to prison??

- Issue library cards to offenders before they are released
- Public library-style programs in prison





Have you reached out to  
correctional librarians??

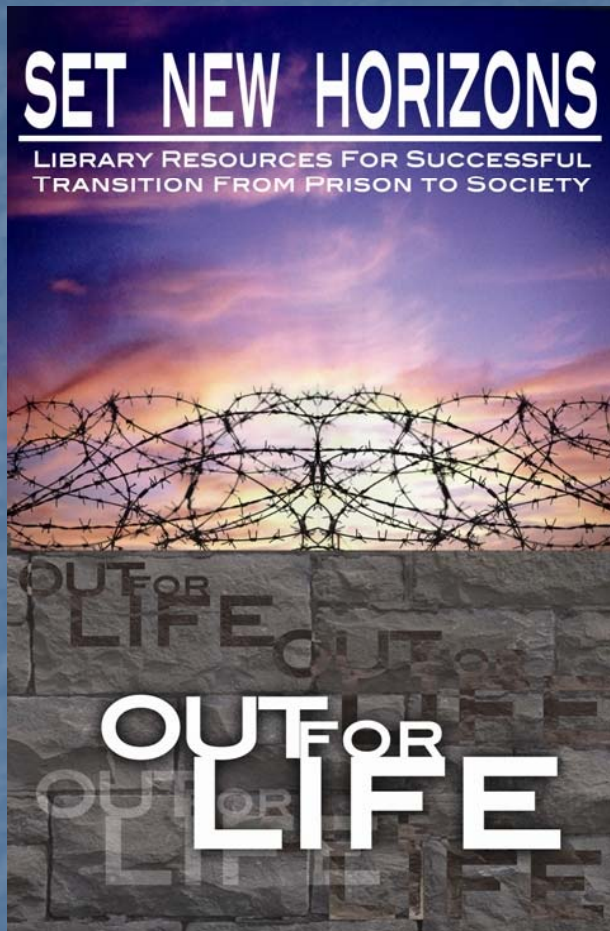
# What correctional librarians can teach you

- Provide mini-workshops on working with this population
- Talk about the types of resources needed by recently released offenders
- Dispel myths and misconceptions about working with offenders

# Successful Transition

- ◆ Rebuilds the lives of offenders
- ◆ Protects communities
- ◆ Saves taxpayer money





# Life after 20-to-Life:

## Library Resources for Successful Transition from Prison to Community

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