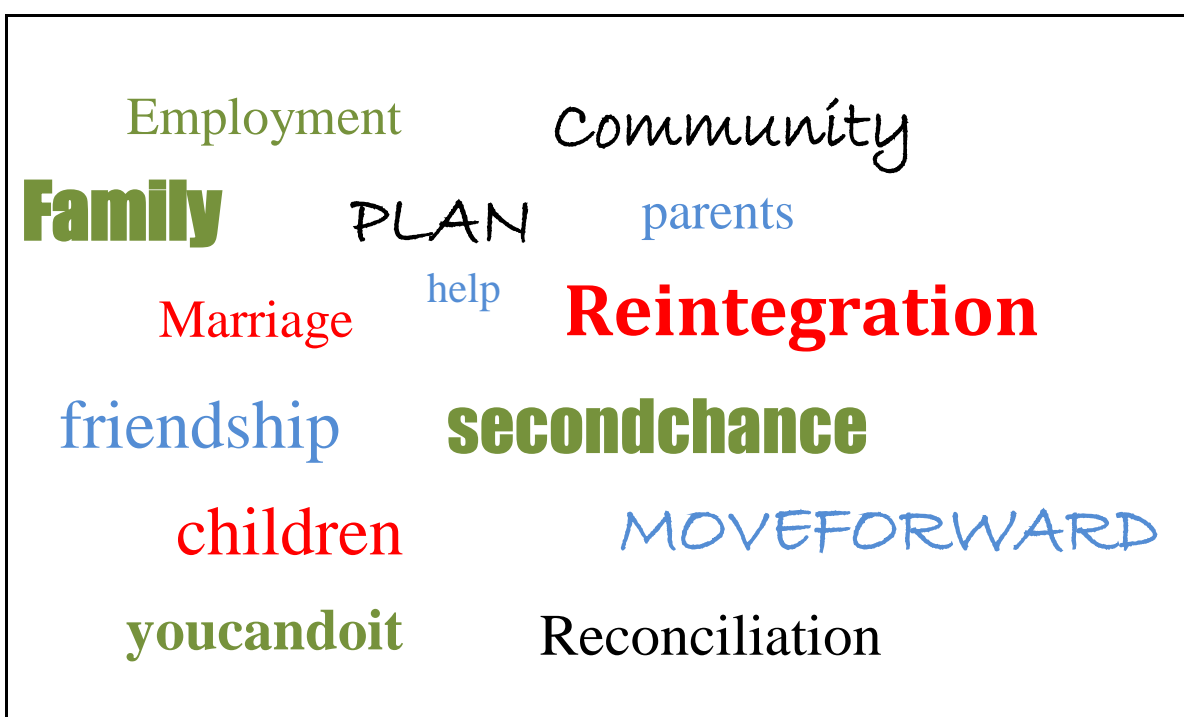


Time's Up: A reintegration toolkit for families



CFCN
Canadian Families and
Corrections Network

RCAFD
Regroupement canadien d'aide
aux familles des détenu(e)s

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Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is for:

Families who have faced the incarceration of a family member (and don't want to go through it again).

Those who have committed a crime, and want to get out, stay out and be with the people who love and support them.

Those who want to understand family reintegration following incarceration in a correctional facility.

The first resource in this series, *Time Together: A survival guide for families and friends visiting in Canadian federal prisons*, was written to help families during the early stages of incarceration in a federal institution. It talks about visiting, security rules, children, parents, partners, and other family members coping with the incarceration.

The next resource, *One Day at a Time: Writings on Facing the Incarceration of a Friend or Family Member*, shared the stories of some of the experts - family members. They know what it is like to have a family member who is incarcerated, and how to keep a relationship going and growing during incarceration.

Families from Abbotsford, Hamilton, Kingston, Montreal, and Sept Îles contributed their comments for this resource, *Time's Up: A reintegration toolkit for families*. Their comments about family and community reintegration are found in the sidebars of each page. Their stories may help other family members to know that they are not alone in what they are experiencing. Being a family member of someone who had been incarcerated is a hard path. Reintegration is no easier. The CFCN thanks the families for their courage and integrity in sharing their stories.

The CFCN apologises when parts of this toolkit do not speak to your family experience. Every family's experience is unique. For example, the needs of men who are reintegrating are different from those of women, and the needs of a marital partner who is returning home are different from that of a son or daughter who is reintegrating. Sometimes the type of offence that was committed causes difficulties during family and community reintegration. If this toolkit does not address a particular need, the CFCN would certainly welcome your comments.

Family can make the difference

A family member speaks: "All healthy relationships have ups and downs. We practice standing alone and standing together. We are not into treating each other as hostages, or disrespectfully and we are honest and open with our communications. This is important. Learning patience and treating each other respectfully and coming from a loving place in our hearts and being gentle with each other are a good way to be."

When a person is in the military or in hospital, friends, neighbours and some community services offer support to family members who are touched by the separation. When a family member is incarcerated, the community often does not respond in the same way. Family members are not always treated as an asset, as individuals with dignity and respect.

Family members, however, may be the most important support to the incarcerated person while he or she is serving their sentence and during reintegration. Relationships, knowing that you are important to another person, are a basic need of human beings. The family is often able to see the good qualities of the person, looking beyond, while not forgetting, the crime that was committed. They may be willing to provide support for a longer period of time than anyone else in the community.

This toolkit contains helpful suggestions for families who are reuniting. It gives suggestions concerning the changes that happen during family and community reintegration. It gives ideas of how to plan and what goals to set. It also contains some suggestions about families who are anxious about their personal safety.

Many families shared with us what their needs are during reintegration. Their comments are found throughout this book.

The suggestions in this book are also based on restorative justice, an approach that focuses on:

- ★ Who was harmed
- ★ What was the harm
- ★ How can the harm be healed
- ★ How can future harm be prevented

Finally, the suggested steps to successful family reintegration use a framework of seven factors. Your incarcerated family member will be familiar with these factors- the Correctional Service of Canada uses them as a basis for the correctional plan. Focusing on the same factors increases the chances of developing a good reintegration plan as a family, because these factors have been shown through research to be important for reintegration success.

Family Group Decision-making for Reintegration (FGDMR)

Family Group Decision-Making for Reintegration (FGDMR) is a restorative justice approach to family and community reintegration.

FGDMR uses a family group conference - a meeting in which the entire family meets with a trained facilitator to develop a written family-based reintegration plan. It provides a time to discuss what is really going on and what needs to take place for successful family reintegration. After the plan is completed, volunteers are available to provide support to the family during the first critical stages of reintegration.

FGDMR is based on seven factors that are important for reintegration. The factors are:

- Associates
- Employment
- Substance abuse
- Personal / emotional issues
- Attitude
- Community functioning
- Marital and family issues

As was mentioned earlier, these factors are also used by the Correctional Service of Canada in developing correctional plans.

There is a greater likelihood of successful reintegration when a facilitator assists the family to develop the plan through FGDMR. Community support by volunteers is also a significant asset to success.

Families, however, may choose to develop a plan on their own. Directions on how to do this, including the necessary steps to follow, are found later on in this toolkit.

Family Group Decision-making for Reintegration (FGDMR) :

The process by which a family, through a family group conference, develops a family-based reintegration plan for successful family and community reintegration, and involving community support for the family.

Family Group Conference (FGC): a meeting between family members.

Things are not the way they used to be

A family member speaks: "It's been different since you are not here. You have to take into account that while you've been in prison our lives had to go on and things between the family have changed."

A family member speaks: "Wrong choices have been made before. I will not tolerate this. I will not wait again. This is enough."

A family member speaks: "If I ever see you or anyone else in danger by your actions I will report it for your own protection."

Things are not the way they used to be. Prisoners frequently come out of prison thinking that little has changed. This thinking can be the most dangerous part of re-uniting as a family. They may become increasingly frustrated and angry with the differences. Life has changed and there is no going back. There is no 'back' to go to. The children have grown, jobs have changed, and members of the family have taken on different responsibilities. Then there is living with a criminal record and all the changes in society.

Here are some important points for families to think about:

Family members have expectations of the returning family member. They want the returning family member to be accountable for his or her behaviour. The greatest success happens when returning family members take responsibility for their actions, are willing to change, and are open to support from the family, from parole supervision and from services in the community.

Families will do as much as they can. If they hesitate it is because they don't know what to do or they may want the returning family member to take more responsibility. Family members may be afraid of living through the effects of criminal behaviour again. Trust needs to be earned back. Family members need to see and be reassured of positive change.

Family members are capable people who have already managed a very difficult time during incarceration.

Family members are not parole officers and should not be expected to take on the role of a secondary parole officer. They may know when help is needed and put out a call for help as a constructive support to the returning family member.

Safety is important for everyone. Past patterns of violence and abuse can recur during reintegration. Only by reaching out for help will the cycle stop.

Plan for success, or if there was a plan, review and revise it. Make sure that there is an agreement within the family about what to do if there start to be signs of slipping.

Reintegration is not always successful. For some, reintegration may be a matter of 'successive approximation' – getting things continually closer to success. Parole revocation and a return to prison may be seen as a failure by the family or the prisoner. It should not necessarily be seen as such. It can be a "time out," a needed reality check that there is still more work and learning to do.

A family member speaks: "There is no way I would not be hurt and upset, it is trying and painful for both parties. It would depend on circumstances of the return of the person to prison. If it was due to offensive criminal acts I wouldn't be able to stay."

A place to call home

One of the benefits of family support is that there is a place to call home. This makes a huge difference – finding housing or suitable accommodations can be a huge problem after being in prison. It also provides an address, often a major stumbling block for someone who is being released from prison. Application forms for almost anything require an address and often a telephone number.

The CFCN's definition of family is the definition that is used by the United Nations: a family is "a group of individuals who are related by affection, kinship, dependency or trust." Another unique definition of family is: "A family are those who take you in when no-one else will."

This statement captures the sense of safety, belonging and love that a family can provide. There is someone there who cares and who can provide needed support. Having someone waiting at the gate can be a strong indicator toward successful reintegration. A family or those who can be like a family: a group of volunteers, a circle of support, a faith group, can make a huge difference.

A family member speaks: "I will walk with you in any way that can make this experience as positive for you as possible."

Sometimes the family struggles with welcoming the person back into the day-to-day life as a family. One extra person needs to be included in day-to-day decisions, activities and finances. Families often have unresolved anger around the criminal behaviour, or of having had to 'do time' themselves.

At other times the family experiences renewed community stigma when a family member appears in the media because of parole or release into the community. There may also be changes in attitudes from employers, landlords and neighbours. As well, the reporting relationship with a parole officer can cause stress within the family.

Some have called this part of the reintegration process, "serving the second sentence." Just when you thought it was over, there is still more 'time' to do in the community.

For families, reintegration is something that is waited for, hoped for, and planned for. Sometimes it is even feared. It takes work to get back together. Relationships can be tough work, even without the added baggage of incarceration and reintegration.

Sometimes the family can't help any more

Sometimes the family can't help any more. The family's emotional bank account is empty. The financial bank account may be empty as well. Everyone feels burnt out and all resources are used up.

Sometimes a family member was the victim of the offence. The harm has been too much. Perhaps the pain of dealing with the responses from the community has been too much.

Sometimes the most honest and supportive thing a family can do is to say, "I can't give any more."

Sometimes a 'surrogate family' is a solution. This is the kind of support that is offered by Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) to high risk and/or high needs individuals. It can also be found in other forms of support groups or services, including some community health, mental health services or 'wrap-around' service.

A family member speaks: "I will not sit back and ignore it. I will talk to you and see that you get help in order to keep you from harming yourself. I will tell you when I see you changing. I want you to promise me that you will listen. Promise me, and promise the kids."

Building community support

Community support can be helpful to reintegration for both the family and the returning person. Building community support goes a long way in building up the confidence of others. Success is almost always a result of working well with others.

This toolkit is part of the Frontenac Model, named after Frontenac Institution in Kingston, Ontario. The Frontenac Model involves trained volunteers who support the family during the first year of family and community reintegration.

A family member speaks: "Build and use your support – without support most of the released are not out for long."

These volunteers provide what all families need from time to time: friendly support. The volunteers are not therapists, counsellors or social workers. They are trained volunteers who mentor the family with their Reintegration plan. They support a family through a time of change.

Other examples of support that returning persons and their families can use are:

A family member speaks: "Life when you get out will be difficult, but with love and understanding you and I can make it, with a lot of support from families and support groups."

- ★ A faith group, (local church, synagogue, mosque or other place of worship)
- ★ An employer
- ★ A voluntary sector or not-for-profit organization such as the
 - John Howard Society
 - Elizabeth Fry Society
 - St. Leonard's Society
 - Salvation Army
- ★ Community Chaplain
- ★ Lifeline (if your family member is a lifer)
- ★ AA, NA, Al-Anon
- ★ A treatment centre
- ★ A community counselling centre

Returning prisoners have to show, through their behaviour, that they are worthy of an individual or organization to place their belief in them. They need to "walk the talk".

Community support, whether from the family or from community organizations, requires a plan. This is where Family Group Decision Making for Reintegration (FGDMR) comes in. It is about making a plan.

Making a family reintegration plan

It is certainly better to prepare your family reintegration plan with assistance. FGD MR uses a trained facilitator to help the family create a family reintegration plan. The facilitator will be aware of resources and support systems that the family may not be aware of.

This does not mean that you are unable to develop a family reintegration plan. Families can choose to work through a planning process on their own. It is that there is a greater chance of success in both developing and implementing the plan if there is a facilitator involved. The facilitator can guide the family through some of the pitfalls and past the roadblocks that can occur.

The facilitator cannot do it all - the plan is the family's plan, not the facilitator's plan. The plan is developed to address the family's needs as the family understands their needs to be.

The next section of this toolkit describes the steps that a family can follow to develop a family reintegration plan without the assistance of a facilitator. The family may use this as a guide or as a beginning to reach out for assistance.

A family member speaks: "I am gonna try to help whether you want it or not. Me and the rest of the family aren't going to go through it again."

Step 1: Associates

A family member speaks: "Keep in healthy relationships and have a positive outlook. Stay away from people that have negative attitudes."

A family member speaks: "Some people thrive on taking someone else down with them. Be careful whom you choose for your friends. There are some very cool clean and sober people in the community. (and then some not so cool)."

A family member speaks: "You are judged by the company you keep – good and bad."

Research has found that the Associates factor is one of the strongest predictors of whether someone who has been in prison will successfully maintain a crime-free lifestyle and stay out of prison.

This is because the power or influence of peers is behind many relapses into crime or into substance abuse that may lead to crime. It is for this reason that those who are being released from prison need to keep the right persons in their lives. Peers and associates play a powerful, influential role. Often parolees have a non-association stipulation - they are not able to knowingly associate with other known criminals as part of their parole restrictions.

Reintegration can be a lonely time. Prison is a strange place, a place of loneliness while having people around all the time, and with little privacy. However, people know your name. The prisoner is a 'somebody.' People share something in common, even if it is being incarcerated.

Someone who is being released from prison needs to re-learn to identify with individuals who do not live a criminal lifestyle. It means learning to identify with 'square johns,' those who get up, go to work, pay their bills, cook, go shopping, have hobbies, watch TV, do things in moderation, and so on. Average, everyday citizens.

Bottom line, returning family members are responsible for their behaviour. Families can help them by encouraging new associates and friends and offer reminders to not associate with those who may lead them into crime.

A non-association stipulation can affect the family. The non-association stipulation may mean that, for example, two wives who supported each other during the incarceration of their partners may not be able to meet as couples once their respective partners are released. This can be an emotionally charged discovery. If in doubt in your specific situation, ask for further clarification from someone, such as whoever is providing supervision to your released family member.

It is better to find out too soon than too late.

Quick Check - Associates

The following questions are a quick check of the issues related to associates in order to develop your family reintegration plan.

Does the returning family member have one or more associates, friends or family members who are involved in crime?

Does the returning family member have a co-accused?

Was the returning family member a member of a gang or organization that is involved in crime?

Will the returning family member have a non-association clause or stipulation?

Does the returning family member have one or more close friends who are not involved in crime?

Does the returning family member have contact with at least one community organization that can provide support during reintegration?

Step 2: Employment

A family member speaks: "In order to get a job, it is very important for you to stick with it, do not give up, and be prepared to face rejection and keep going until you get a 'Yes.' "

A family member speaks: "It's gonna be tough ... you're going to feel "Hat -in-hand" trying to apply for a job. You have to keep trying - make finding a job, your job."

A family member speaks: "Employers will want to know why there was such a 'time gap' between the previous employment and the current status when looking for a job."

Finding a job is another one of the strongest pieces of successful reintegration. It helps to stabilize one's lifestyle, and it may help with developing a sense of self. It certainly helps the family with expenses.

Hunting for a job, applying for a job and going to job interviews are stressful. Anyone who is looking for a job will experience being turned down. Some suggestions when looking for work are:

- ★ Employment possibilities and pay are determined by education and experience.
- ★ Skills, previous work experience and contacts are important.
- ★ A good résumé, good planning, perseverance and good luck also help.

Getting a job can be complicated for someone with a criminal record. Gaps in employment records are often a give-away to an employer. Many employers are good at getting information from an interview or from references. Honesty is the best policy in most cases - it can save problems later on. Employers may be unwilling to take the risk of hiring someone who has been in prison.

On release, any job may be a good job as long as it serves the purpose of helping to stay out. It can be a stepping stone to another job.

And after getting the job, keeping the job is the next step. Sometimes this is as simple as being there on time and doing the job how it is supposed to be done.

For some, taking some time to re-adjust to living in the community before looking for a job is a first step. How a returning person manages the transition back to the community is different for each person. A period of adjustment may be a preparation stage to looking for a job and knowing how to cope with the interviews.

A family's best approach is to be encouraging and supportive. Families can help the job seeker by encouraging them to be realistic in their expectations and based on previous employment, experience, education and qualifications.

Quick Check: Employment

The following questions are a quick check of the issues related to employment in order to develop your family reintegration plan.

Was the returning family member employed when they were arrested?

Was the returning family member's financial situation good before they were arrested?

Did the returning family member rely on social assistance?

Did the returning family member rely on crime or illegal activities for income?

Was the returning family member ever employed for a full year?

Does the returning family member have at least Grade 12?

Does the returning family member have a trade?

Did the returning family member upgrade their level of education while incarcerated?

Did the returning family member pay rent or have a mortgage before being incarcerated?

Step 3: Substance abuse

A family member speaks:

"Alcohol and drugs are a sure fire, fast way into trouble - They are not good for self-esteem and the reality of facing life on life's terms is impossible with alcohol or drugs in your life."

A family member speaks:

"Alcohol and drugs are everywhere. You will have easy access. It is only your choice. Do you really want to stay home and be with the family and continue to get support? Or isolate yourself and hurt your family, and possibly end up back in jail. Freedom is about choice. Make yours wisely."

Substance abuse is a difficulty for many persons who have committed a crime. For many, prison can be an opportunity to get clean or sober. While some people can get clean or sober on their own, this is the exception. Most need some kind of intervention or a treatment program in order to get and keep free of substance abuse.

Someone returning from prison will not be able to remain clean or sober if family members, particularly a partner, are still abusing drugs or alcohol. A partner may need to make a commitment to staying clean and sober.

Remaining clean and sober is often related to associates. It is important to find friends who do not abuse alcohol or drugs. Alcohol and drugs abuse does not cause crime to happen, but increases the chance, serving as 'liquid or chemical courage'.

One of the skills in remaining clean and sober is to find activities or people that fill the space that drugs or alcohol used to fill. So - search your community for opportunities to connect with people who do not use drugs or alcohol. Start an exercise program or a new hobby together. Visit a community information centre to find out what is happening in your local area. Go to a church, synagogue, mosque or place of worship. Attend AA, NA or Al-Anon. Volunteer as a family.

A relapse can start a quick slide back to prison. Remember that the family can help, but it is the responsibility of the returning family member to commit to staying clean or sober.

Build positive people into your life as a family.

Quick Check - Substance abuse

The following questions are a quick check of the issues related to substance use in order to develop your family reintegration plan.

Were drugs or alcohol ever a problem for your returning family member?

Has your returning family member ever had problems at school or at work because of drugs or alcohol?

Did your returning family member's use of drugs or alcohol ever cause any marital or family problems?

Did your returning family member ever break the law while under the influence of drugs or alcohol?

Did socializing with others always or regularly include drugs or alcohol?

Did your returning family member take any addictions programs while incarcerated?

Does your returning family member already have a written relapse prevention plan?

Will your returning family member attend AA or NA meetings upon reintegration, and do they know where and when the closest AA or NA meeting is?

Are other family members currently struggling with substance abuse?

Step 4: Personal / emotional issues

A family member speaks: "You need to be sure of the conditions of release and follow them to the "T." "

A family member speaks: "How do I know you'll stay out when you get out? Once this is all said and done what will we have to work on?"

A family member speaks: "You need to know that counselling is a main priority, whether for parenting or relationship."

A family member speaks: "We may have to knock on many doors before we find the proper help, but we must be persistent to find counselling for us. Even if you think we don't need it."

Personal / emotional issues are very complex, as these issues often require programs, counseling or treatment. Your family member may need these kinds of intervention to work out those things in his or her life to get out, stay out and not hurt anyone any more.

Personal / emotional issues can be divided into several categories, described by researchers Robinson, Porporino and Beal:

Self Concept – personal issues, cultural issues, view of self, gang affiliation, interpersonal relationship issues

Cognitive (thinking) - problem solving, interpersonal skills, empathy (the ability to understand the feelings of others), narrow thinking

Behavioral – anxiety, assertiveness, impulsivity, risk-taking, aggression, anger and hostility, frustration tolerance, gambling, conflict resolution skills and other behavioural problems

Personal characteristics – personality dispositions, sexual behaviour, sexual attitudes, mental health and mental health disorders.

(based on "A Review of the Literature on Personal Emotional Need Factors". 1998. p. 82-85)

There are several programs that the Parole Board or the parole officer may request that your family member take. These programs are part of the correctional plan or release plan. It is important to know what programs your family member has taken or will need to take.

Programs within the Correctional Service of Canada that help with the personal/emotional factor include:

Cognitive Skills Program
Boosting Cognitive Skills Program
Anger and Emotions Management Program
Boosting Anger and Emotions Management Program

Parenting Skills Program
The Leisure Skills Program
The Community Integration Program
Counter-Point Program
Family Violence Programs
Living Skills Programs
Sexual Offender Programs
Substance Abuse Programs
Violence Prevention Programs

If a returning family member has a significant mental health disorder and is being released from a correctional treatment centre, a social worker from the treatment centre may assist with discharge planning. This can enable the returning member to continue psychological or psychiatric care in the community.

In some cases, programs and treatment intervention are conditions of release because of the nature and extent of the crime. Programs for individuals released from prison have long waiting lists. Waiting for a community program may add stress to the returning person and their family at a time when relapse is a high risk. The family can provide support by encouraging patience, making suggestions about what to do while the name moves up the waiting list, and then by reinforcing any positive changes that they see once the program or treatment begins.

A family member speaks: "When I was getting clean and sober someone told me they were going to get me cleaned up and fit me back into society. I relapsed. How was this going to happen when I never fit in nor did I want to. I eventually sought out organizations and people I was comfortable with and found my comfort zone."

A family member speaks: "We can reach out to organizations such as CFCN, M2W2 or our church, some family and friends. We can help ourselves and each other by working together."

Quick Check - Personal / emotional

The following questions are a quick check of the issues related to personal / emotional issues in order to develop your family reintegration plan.

Was your family member charged with an offence that included robbery or assault with violence?

Was your family member a member of a gang or a criminal organization?

Has your family member been diagnosed with a mental disorder?

Has your family member been required to complete a family violence program?

Has your family member been asked to complete an anger management program?

Does your family member have a learning disability?

Has your family been in an accident or event in which they suffered a brain injury?

Has prolonged drug or alcohol use impaired your family member?

Did your family member commit a sexual offence?

Has your family member been asked to complete a sex offender treatment program?

Step 5: Attitude

People make a choice about how they behave. Behaviour is based on thinking - I think something and I behave in a certain way based on that thinking. Some thinking and attitudes may lead to criminal behaviour.

People also have the ability to change their way of thinking and thus affect their attitude. These changes are needed to begin a new life with the family and in the community.

There are certain ways of thinking and acting that may be needed to survive in prison, but those attitudes don't work in community.

As well, prisons are based on control and safety. Most decisions have been made for your family member. In the community your family member is expected to plan and act on decisions in a way that may now, post-prison, seem unusual to him or her. They may look to you to make decisions for them. At other times it may seem like they are asking for your permission. At even other times, they may resent it when you discuss the rules or routines that are now in place within the family. As one family member shared:

"It was not happily ever after ... He called me 'Keeper' when he was released. There needs to be an exit package for families. He had programs, I had s _ _ _! I had no idea what to expect."

The real world is the community, not the prison. The same is true for attitude. Community attitude is the real attitude, not a prison attitude.

Sometimes it is fear that is behind the attitude – fear of interacting with others, fear of looking foolish, fear of not knowing, thinking that everybody else knows something that they don't, fear that they will be judged by others, and so on.

Your returning family member may need some assistance in making needed changes and working past the fear. Helpful suggestions are:

- Help them to keep a calendar, a record of appointments, and telephone calls that they need to make or information that they need to find out.

A family member speaks: "Go humbly. Be sure there is no chip on his shoulder. Many people are willing to help someone who identifies the challenges he faces."

A family member speaks: "From a gentle and loving place in my heart, I will communicate what I see happening and gently remind you that you don't want to end up in a bad place in life. The choice is yours and yours to make. I love you and know you deserve a better serene life."

A family member speaks: "Try to find activities to share with your family and loved ones. It will strengthen your bond."

A family member speaks: "When you're feeling weak and can't share with me you make bad decisions, you may re-offend and those who care about you suffer. We lose you again."

- Information can be difficult to find. Put important telephone numbers on the refrigerator, including organizations that may be able to provide information.
- Encourage patience.
- Waiting lists are very common, sometimes weeks or months. Give a reminder that it is nothing personal against your family member.
- Assist your family member to find the office where they will have an appointment a day or so before the appointment. This may include what bus route to take, and so on, so that they can be prepared.
- After their appointment, ask if they had any difficulty getting there on time or if they had difficulty finding the building or office.

Your family member may not realize that missing an appointment can be as important as missing a count inside the prison walls.

There is something else about attitude. The rules in the prison are different than the rules in the community. The language people use has different meanings. For example the word "goof" may cause the returning family member to become tense. In prison, this word means a certain thing while in the community it means nothing. It can be a drastic shift in thinking, from seeing the world from the way it was in prison to seeing the world as a member of the community.

It is important to remember what reintegration is about. The returning family member is responsible for making positive changes in thinking and attitude. They may be feeling afraid, apprehensive, detached, and unsure of themselves.

They need your support during the transition to the community.

Quick Check – Attitude

The following questions are a quick check of the issues related to attitude in order to develop your family reintegration plan.

Would you say that your returning family member has a positive attitude toward persons in authority such as employers, supervisors or parole officers?

Would you say that your returning family member has a positive attitude toward having and keeping a job?

Would you say that your returning family member can connect with persons who have not been involved in crime?

Would you say that your returning family member is usually able to understand someone else's point of view?

Would you say that your returning family member has a meaningful hobby or leisure activity?

Would you say that your returning family member is able to balance family responsibilities with other activities?

Would you say that your returning family member is able to accept criticism when it is constructive?

Would you say that your returning family member is generally argumentative?

Would others say that your returning family member is relatively free of prejudice against another's race, culture or gender?

Is the returning family member able to judge the difference between people who may be a positive influence from those who may be a negative influence?

Does the returning family member talk like they are still in prison?

Step 6: Community functioning

A family member speaks:

"Develop good support and communicate weekly with healthy support people who don't drink or do drugs. Abstain from chumming with people who indulge in drugs and alcohol. Do healthy things for yourself by deciding whether or not it is worth returning to prison. Make your own decision to discipline yourself to good living."

A place to live, moving, finding a doctor and dentist, opening a bank account, getting a credit card, budgeting and money management, work/family balance, buying groceries, cooking, cleaning, joining community activities. The list of day-to-day tasks is endless and it is not like in prison. The exception may be some of the units in minimum security institutions where prisoners are responsible for their own 'house,' such as in the Phoenix Unit at Frontenac Institution in Kingston, Ontario.

Once your family member finally gets home, there is no one to tell them how, when and where to do anything related to daily living.

Sports, music, pot lucks, church groups are some of the activities that may open doors to new community relationships. It will also provide a health balance for physical and emotional well-being.

It is the responsibility of the returning family member to follow regular routines and make a plan for daily activities and tasks. It is important that the plan includes the needs of other family members. Everyone may have to work together to make a plan or a schedule that meets everyone's needs and lists each person's responsibilities or duties. Once the plan is made, then it is everyone's job to do what they agreed to do.

Prison is not the normal place to live in. The real world is the world beyond the walls and fences of the prison.

Quick Check – Community functioning

The following questions are a quick check of the issues related to community functioning in order to develop your family reintegration plan.

Is the returning family member able to ask others for help or information?

Is the returning family member able to start a conversation with others?

Is the returning family member able to solve problems and conflicts without being overwhelmed by frustration?

Is the returning family member able to set goals and keep appointments?

Is the returning family member able to be caring and understand of the feelings of others?

Does the returning family member generally respond with pro-social behaviour?

Is the returning family member able to make a budget and keep to it?

Does the returning family member want to get out and stay out?

Step 7: Marital and Family Issues

A family member speaks: "We will share in the communication. We will treat each other with respect. We will agree to be able to disagree."

A family member speaks: "There is going to be financial discussion, open frank discussions about our expectations and that we are in this together. If you choose not to live up to what we have discussed, then...."

Family relationships can be strengthened or pulled apart during reintegration. Reintegration can be a testing ground, and the marital and family tests will be different for each family. It will also depend on the family relationship. Issues facing a partner who is reintegrating will be different from a son or daughter who is reintegrating, or from an elder family member who is being released, and so on.

Reintegration can bring many interpersonal difficulties to a head. This includes how disagreements or conflict situations are resolved, concerns about past or further incidence of family violence, the rules for living together as a family, the whole spectrum of human relationships.

This may include children and parenting. Visiting in the prison and Private Family Visits will have supported the child-parent relationship but parenting 24/7 can be a much different demand.

It may include attempting to regain custody and/or access to children. These are concerns during incarceration that may take on a greater concern during reintegration.

Marital and family issues may also depend on when the relationship began. Reintegration will be different for families in which the relationship existed before incarceration when compared to a partnered or parenting relationship that began during incarceration. Couples who have met during the incarceration period are in the special situation of never having lived together. The adjustment is a new beginning.

Changes that the family members may experience include the following:

- Family routines will be changed and sometimes challenged when another member is added.
- Everyone may feel off-balance around how family tasks are divided up, how space is used, when meals are, and so on.
- Some individuals who are released from prison keep a bedroom light on or must keep the bedroom door closed or locked while sleeping.
- Some individuals won't open the door of the refrigerator without asking for permission.
- Some families get anxious because the returning family member wants to be with them ALL the time.
- Families live initially with the anxiety or fears of slips toward crime and loss again.

Some suggestions that will help include :

- Talking and listening carefully to each other to solve problems. Discuss fears directly.
- Respecting and understanding each person in the relationship - each person is going through a change. Be open and try to understand what each person is doing to make the relationship work.
- Making time as a family. It takes time, patience, sensitivity and commitment to work out the changes of reuniting under the same roof.
- Reach out for help from an organization, counselling service, chaplain or clergy person, anyone who can provide marital or parenting support.
- Consider Family Group Decision-Making for Reintegration.

Early reintegration may feel like a honeymoon, romantic and full of dreams. Difficulties often follow that require hard work.

A family member speaks: "The relationship will need to be worked on every day. Counselling will be necessary. Parenting rules will need to be dealt with in agreement of both parents. Understanding and communication are key."

A family member speaks: "It's been different since you were not here. You have to take into account that while you've been in prison our lives had to go on and things between the family have changed."

Quick Check – Marital and Family Issues

The following questions are a quick check of the issues related to marital and family issues in order to develop your family reintegration plan.

Are good communication skills used in discussions?

Do disagreements tend to remain unsolved?

Do discussions regularly become heated, with swearing or abusive words?

Are some issues avoided, taboo and are not talked about?

Have disagreements in the past ended with pushing, slapping, kicking, punching, choking, throwing objects, or forced sexual contact?

Is there a balance between work, non-work time and family time?

Are other family members in conflict with the law?

Has substance abuse caused family or marital problems?

Did the partnered/ marital relationship begin during incarceration?

Did the parenting relationship begin during incarceration?

Are effective parenting skills an issue?

Are there child custody and access issues?

Has the family ever been assessed by a professional because of a family-related problem?

Was a family member a victim of the offence?

Step 8: Reintegration Plan Worksheet

CAUTION!!!

**If there is strong disagreement as you do the following exercise,
STOP.**

Talk about what is causing the disagreement.

**If the disagreement moves to argument,
STOP.**

Search out a facilitator to assist with the family-based reintegration plan.

A. Preparation

Sometimes the best preparation is to decide not to do anything, right now. Re-read the Caution above.

If you decide to proceed, then make several copies of the next few pages. Each person and each issue will need a separate sheet.

B. Brainstorm

Each of you individually write, on separate pieces of paper, a list of things that you think that the family needs to sort out in order to ensure a successful return to family and community. Do not be limited by the numbers below. Add more if you need to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

C. Factors

Go through your brainstorm list and write down the factor that you think represents or corresponds to each reintegration issue. You may have to go back and re-read the descriptions of the various factors. Make a note in the margin of your list of the one or two factors that appear more often than other factors.

- ☐ Associates
- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Substance abuse
- ☐ Personal / emotional issues
- ☐ Attitude
- ☐ Community functioning
- ☐ Marital and family issues

D. Share and Compare

i) Share and compare your lists with each other.

ii) Go through your list and write an "A" beside those items on your lists that are the same as another family member.

iii) Write a "B" beside those items that are on one person's list only.

iv) Write a "C" beside those items that conflict - one person has an item on their list but another person has the exact opposite on their list. For example, one person may write, "During reintegration we need to meet regularly with a community organization for counselling," while another person may write, "During reintegration we will handle everything ourselves. Nobody needs to know our business."

v) Choose one item from the "A" list, that is, an issue that is the same (or almost the same) on each list. Agree to discuss this one reintegration issue. Because the issue is on each of your lists, it may be easier to develop a plan for it. Some families find that it is best to first practice with an issue that is not emotionally loaded. Practice will help with other issues that may be more difficult to talk about.

If you don't have an "A" item to agree upon, then choose a "B" item from one of your lists. For this first attempt, do not pick a "B" item that is emotionally loaded or will be difficult to talk about right now.

D. Summary:

Together, write a summary of the issue or reintegration need, as you understand it, on the lines below.

Use or practice good communication skills as you prepare this summary:

- * Only one person speaks at a time.**
- * Everyone's opinion is valuable and everyone is worth listening to.**
- * I will only speak for myself.**
- * I will not blame, accuse or attempt to shame the other person.**
- * We are doing this because we want our relationship and reintegration to work.**
- * Use phrases that begin with "I feel " and "I think." Do not use sentences that start with the word "you."**

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

E. Plan

In order to develop a plan to deal with this issue, discuss the four questions below. When you are ready, write your commitments in the spaces below. Be specific. Putting something in writing will let you check back on it later:

1. What the returning family member agrees to do:

2. What we agree to do as a family:

3. What community supports we agree to work with:

4. What we agree to do if there starts to be slips:

F. Next step

Once you have successfully developed a reintegration plan for this one issue, go on to another issue in your Brainstorm lists. Once again, look for an issue that is the same, or almost the same, on your lists.

After some practice, you may want to work on other important issues that may be more emotionally loaded or that may be an issue for only one family member. Once again, don't hesitate to reach out for help and request the help of a facilitator.

Conclusion

Family life is seriously affected by incarceration. The approach suggested in this toolkit will encourage some of the healing that needs to take place. It provides the opportunity for the family to make a reintegration plan. The plan is something to use. It is something to refer to when the reintegration road gets bumpy.

Successful reintegration also requires a community that understands the challenges facing the returning person and the family. Only with a strong partnership between all those who are affected by incarceration and reintegration can there be stronger and safer communities.

A family member speaks: "We are worth whatever it takes to get us through the challenges."

Your Notes

