

Last Year More Than 24,500 People Came Home from Prison in New York

What is the NY Reentry Roundtable?

The NY Reentry Roundtable brings together reentry advocates to discuss strategies to successfully transition the formerly incarcerated back into family life and their communities. There are more than 56,000 inmates in New York State prisons. Once released, people return in high concentration to their home communities, particularly in the South Bronx, Central Brooklyn, and Harlem neighborhoods.

The Community Service Society (CSS) formed the Reentry Roundtable in 2005, inviting formerly incarcerated people, direct service providers, government agency representatives and community activists to come together each month to address the obstacles faced by those released from prison.

Sharing Information, Building Alliances

The Reentry Roundtable represents over 50 stakeholder organizations, providing a unique forum for networking, information sharing, and building alliances.

The Roundtable focuses on systemic change at the New York State level through a legislative agenda, which advocates for critical reform in:

- Education
- Employment
- Family connections
- Parole and sentencing
- Housing
- Voting rights

Roundtable Perspectives

Recent Roundtable guest speakers include:

Sean Pica, Executive Director, HudsonLink for Higher Education in Prison

Benjamin Foley and Iben Trino-Molenkamp, Organization for Visual Progression (editors, *Your Rights, Your Future: Preparing for Reentry* – dvd)

Chris Fabricant, Director of the Criminal Justice Clinic at Pace University School of Law

Vincent Schiraldi, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Probation

Ryan Moser, Managing Director, Eastern Region, Corporation for Supportive Housing

John Valverde, Director, The Osborne Association's Green Career Center

“The Roundtable is an invaluable space for the NYS reentry communities to exchange ideas and take action.”

Glenn Martin, VP of Development & Public Affairs, The Fortune Society



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Setting the Agenda for Change

About Albany Advocacy Day

As an outgrowth of the New York Reentry Roundtable, CSS established “Albany Advocacy Day” in 2007 to enable community-based stakeholders to meet with key legislators in Albany, New York, to advocate on behalf of the formerly incarcerated as well as for those who are incarcerated.

More than 100 participants attended each of the 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 Albany Advocacy Days. The Roundtable Agenda was presented to key legislators as a tool to help them advocate for critical reentry issues.

In 2010, our efforts, and those of other advocates, were instrumental in passage of groundbreaking legislation:

- **Permitting employers holding liquor licenses to hire people with felony conviction histories**
- **Allowing judges to use discretion in setting or modifying child support obligations of incarcerated non-custodial parents.**
- **Granting merit time release eligibility to survivors of domestic violence whose convictions were related to their experiences of domestic violence.**
- **Ending prison gerrymandering to stop census policy of counting prisoners where they are incarcerated, rather than their home districts**
- **Limiting time that individuals are listed on the NYS Department of Correction “Inmate Lookup” to curtail improper use of this website to the detriment of people with conviction histories**
- **Granting foster care agencies discretion to delay filing termination of parental rights papers when a parent is incarcerated or in a residential drug treatment program in order to help families work toward unification**
- **Standardizing references to Certificates of Relief from Disabilities and Certificates of Good Conduct in all occupational licensing laws, so that either certificate acts to lift automatic bars to licensure**

On the Agenda in 2011:

Removing Barriers, Rebuilding Lives

The Albany Advocacy Day Agenda for May 10, 2011 includes bills to amend laws that create unnecessary barriers for both the formerly incarcerated *and* people currently incarcerated. Important topics covered by these bills include:

- **Restoring Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grant eligibility for incarcerated people**
- **Enact the SAFE Parole Act, which would change the job of the Parole Board from sentencing to evaluation, requiring the board to base decisions on applicants’ post-conviction prison records and other criteria of readiness for re-entry**
- **Permit the conditional sealing of misdemeanor convictions for non-violent, non-sexual offenses so as to alleviate employment and housing discrimination**
- **Require state agencies to refrain from including information on RAP sheets and criminal history record reports about old arrests for which no disposition was reported, except when furnishing to law enforcement and for certain other purposes**
- **“Ban the Box” by requiring that employers not inquire about applicants’ conviction histories until the conditional job offer stage**
- **Standardize enforcement of employment discrimination claims, giving people aggrieved by government agencies the same options as people discriminated against by private employers**
- **Pass legislation directing courts to presume that applications for Certificates of Relief from Disabilities *should be granted* where this relief is in the public interest and consistent with the applicant’s rehabilitation**
- **Amend the NYS Human Rights Law to prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of an Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal (ACD), and amend Criminal Procedure Law so that an ACD is considered a “termination in favor of the accused” for licensing & employment purposes.**