

Improving Outcomes for American Indian/Alaska Native People Returning to the Community from Incarceration:

A Resource Guide for Service Providers





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Introduction

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people are overrepresented in correctional facilities, with their rate of incarceration in local jails being more than twice the rates of Asian, Hispanic, and White individuals.¹ Literature on criminal justice involvement identified reentry as a preeminent challenge, shining light on the need to provide adequate services and resources for successful reintegration. In addition to difficulties encountered during reentry that are common across race and ethnic groups, AI/AN individuals face unique challenges related to their historical and cultural background. Consistent with President Biden's executive orders on [tribal sovereignty](#) and [incarceration](#), this tool kit seeks to empower tribal communities and providers working with AI/AN populations across the country to improve outcomes for AI/AN individuals returning to the community from incarceration. Based on feedback received from individuals who have been incarcerated, this tool kit uses the term 'returning community members' to describe this population.

This resource guide is a compilation of federal resources, research, examples, and helpful considerations for facilitating the successful transition of AI/AN returning community members to promote individual and community well-being. This document is intended for practitioners in correctional facilities and community-based reentry organizations, including social workers, corrections staff, peer specialists, substance use treatment providers, and more. The resource guide summarizes findings from a literature review and individual conversations with federal staff and community stakeholders. Methodology details can be found in the appendix. This document is organized by topics so that practitioners can quickly find information and resources in their areas of interest.

The tool kit covers the following topics. Each section provides a brief overview of the issue and describes AI/AN-specific resources (when available), followed by general resources that may be relevant for this population.

- Systematic Considerations
 - Trauma-Informed Care
 - Culturally Responsive Programs
 - Funding, Technical Assistance, and Partnerships
 - Addressing Violence
- Population-Specific Considerations
 - Children and Families
 - Youth
 - Women
- Concrete Needs and Supports
 - Identification

- Stable Housing
- Substance Use and Mental Health Needs
- Other Health Needs
- Education Programs
- Employment and Other Financial Needs

Useful Resources

Organizations getting started in this work might find these resources helpful:

- [Planning a Reentry Program: A Toolkit for Tribal Communities](#), developed with support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the U.S. Department of Justice, is designed to help tribal justice system practitioners create or enhance reentry programs for AI/ANs returning to their communities from jail or prison. It also offers guidance for practitioners who are currently working in a reentry program.
- The [National Reentry Resource Center website](#), funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the Department of Justice, provides up-to-date information and guidance on reentry.

Systematic Considerations

Trauma-Informed Care

AI/AN populations often experience traumatic events at high rates. One study reported that more than a third of this population experienced violence in the previous year.² In addition to traumatic events such as violence, AI/AN populations face historical trauma, which is described by the [Indian Health Service](#) as “cumulative psychological and emotional wounding across generations.”

Given the high levels of trauma exposure among this community, organizations may need to consider whether their services are trauma-informed and whether staff are trained in trauma-informed care. Trauma-informed care involves screening individuals for trauma symptoms and exposure. It also involves recognizing how traditional modes of service delivery may retraumatize individuals and working to provide supportive services instead.³ Avoiding retraumatization of returning community members can be helpful to support this transition and increase everyone’s safety.

AI/AN-Specific Resources

The Indian Health Service offers training on trauma-informed care, including [webinars](#) and [self-paced courses](#) on these topics:

- Historical trauma, including its prevalence, types, and impacts on AI/AN populations
- Evidence-based and emerging best practices to treat trauma symptoms
- The impacts of trauma on employees’ performance, relationships, and well-being

The Administration for Children and Families developed a [resource guide](#) on trauma-informed services specific to AI/AN communities. This guide includes examples of specific trauma-informed models used by organizations serving AI/AN populations.

Additional Resources

For practitioners interested in providing trauma-informed care, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) created a manual, [SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#). The manual describes six key principles and 10 implementation domains of trauma-informed organizational change, such as updating the physical environment and increasing cross-sector collaboration.⁴

For **criminal justice professionals** interested in learning more about the impact of trauma and strategies for developing trauma-informed policies and responses, SAMHSA offers interactive trauma-informed response trainings for the criminal justice setting and train-the-trainer events. To find a trainer in your state, see the [SAMHSA website](#).

The Administration for Children and Families examined how **responsible fatherhood programs** can incorporate trauma-informed approaches into their services for returning fathers. This [brief](#) describes tools such as trauma screeners, organizational assessments, and trainings used in reentry fatherhood programs to implement trauma-informed care. It lists training providers and trauma screening and assessment tools that organizations interested in pursuing this work can use.⁵

Culturally Responsive Programs

Historical and continued discrimination against AI/AN individuals is long-standing and pervades all areas of life. Culturally responsive programs can improve reentry by recognizing and strengthening AI/AN identity as a protective factor in the reentry process. For example, a study of incarcerated Native American individuals found that those who received substance use treatment incorporating Native American cultural components were significantly more likely to understand their recovery, had more pride in themselves, and were more interested in learning about a drug-free life than those who received the standard substance use treatment.⁶ The following are examples of how to increase cultural responsiveness in reentry programs. More information on how to assess a reentry program's cultural responsiveness and identify strategies for improvement is available in the brief [Assessing and Enhancing Cultural Responsiveness in Reentry Programs Through Research and Evaluation](#), featured on the [National Reentry Resource Center](#) website.

Emphasize tradition: Studies indicate that the use of culturally traditional services, such as a traditional healer, can be highly effective in comparison to standard services, both on and off reservations. Notably, for many who reside on reservations, off-reservation services were least impactful, and traditional practices showed promising results. Reentry specialists may seek to identify cultural figures and leaders who may aid in recovery for some AI/ANs, such as spiritual leaders and healers who may provide key insights and referrals.⁷

Incorporate cultural sensitivity and amplify voices: Reentry organizations may be able to support clients struggling with substance use by emphasizing programs that incorporate culturally appropriate approaches and amplify clients' voices and agency. Interventions that incorporate cultural sensitivity and community-based approaches showed high rates of completion.⁸ Indigenous healing methods for mental illness and healing are highlighted in works by psychologist Eduardo Duran and Dr. Michael Yellow Bird.

Here are two examples of culturally responsive services provided to AI/AN returning community members.

- **The South Dakota Women's Prison** population is over 50 percent AI/AN women. To address the needs of this population, the prison provides cultural activities, including regular sweat lodge ceremonies. These ceremonies are held at a sweat lodge that is also used by a men's prison and is stocked through community donations. Incarcerated women on the Native American Council plan and lead the cultural events with the assistance of the prison's cultural coordinator. Other cultural

events, such as powwows, focus on different issues affecting the community, including missing Indigenous people. The South Dakota Department of Corrections posted its policies on sweat lodges and other cultural activities on its [website](#).

- **The American Indian Prison Project Working Group** has monthly Reentry Talking Circles for returning women to help connect them with resources such as housing and employment in a safe cultural setting that incorporates Ojibwe and Dakota culture, lifeways teachings, and quarterly feasts.⁹

Funding, Technical Assistance, and Partnerships

Funding is a crucial part of ensuring that reentry programs can provide adequate and consistent resources and support for the populations they are serving. The U.S. Department of Justice annually releases [funding](#) specific to tribes through its Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation. Funding under this solicitation can be used for a variety of purposes, including reentry programs and alternatives to incarceration. The Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention also provide many programs that support reentry programming through the [Second Chance Act](#). This funding goes to tribal, state, and local governments as well as nonprofit providers.

Additionally, the Department of Justice funds the [Tribal Community Corrections Support Center](#), which provides technical assistance to tribes in the form of remote and on-site training and other resources, including webinars and written materials.

Coordinating with Correctional Facilities and Other Partners

Partnering with correctional facilities to connect with individuals before release, when they have time to participate in programming and may be open to change, can help promote a successful reentry.

The Urban Institute compiled a [guidebook](#) detailing effective practices for community-based organizations in connecting with correctional facilities, including the following steps to establish an effective partnership:

1. Identifying and engaging appropriate partners
2. Identifying common goals
3. Determining the roles and setting terms of the partnership
4. Developing buy-in and staff capacity
5. Developing accountability and communication strategies
6. Developing external buy-in and identifying stakeholders¹⁰

Additional Resources

Practitioners may find the following sources of funding helpful in funding partnerships with corrections and community-based organizations:

- [Grants.gov](#) offers information on all federal grant opportunities, including Second Chance Act funding opportunities.
- [The National Reentry Resource Center](#) provides extensive information and guidance on reentry. Second Chance Act funding is also announced here.

Addressing Violence

AI/AN communities have disproportionately high rates of domestic violence against women, with 39 percent reporting domestic violence experiences.¹¹ The [Battered Women's Justice Project](#), a resource center of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program, provides technical assistance and training to providers to help address intimate partner violence. The presentation [Returning to Honor: Using Culturally-Based Teaching in Batterer's Intervention Programs](#), hosted by the Battered Women's Justice Project, describes ways that Native American teachings can be used to address domestic and sexual violence committed by men against women.

Program Examples

Programs that target individuals who have used any type of violence may consist of individual treatment, group treatment, and other formats. The [National Institute of Justice's CrimeSolutions](#) website describes many practices and programs that address issues related to criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services. The website also rates the effectiveness of these programs. Examples of programs listed on the website are as follows:

- [Functional Family Therapy](#) is a program geared toward justice-involved youth who have participated in or are at risk of violent offenses and risky behaviors. It decreased recidivism and risky behavior among youth. The study populations included AI/AN youth.
 - Families in the program participate in 8 to 30 one-hour sessions depending on case need. The sessions incorporate therapeutic and clinical interventions and aim to help the families use a variety of community resources.
- [Project BUILD](#), a program for youth in detention, uses a violence intervention curriculum that includes topics such as restorative justice and socio-emotional learning. Small groups of AI/AN youth participated in the study.
 - Participation in the program led to decreased recidivism among youth.

Funding and Additional Resources

The **Department of Justice's** Tribal Justice and Safety grants provide funding for tribal practitioners to address violence in schools, community policing, and more. [Open solicitations](#) for available grant funds are published online.

The **Indian Health Service** has a [Domestic Violence Prevention grant and federal award program](#) that provided over \$11 million in funding for 83 projects. The program's website also provides resources such as a webinar series and highlights best practices used by tribes.

Population-Specific Considerations

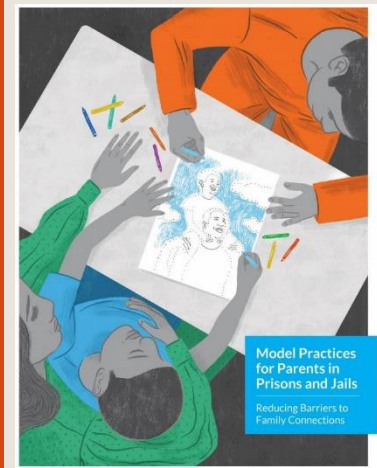
Children and Families

An estimated 26 percent of AI children have or had an incarcerated parent.¹² Research emphasizes the value of parental relationships to reduce risk factors relating to recidivism. For children, parental relationships produce positive effects, including increased self-esteem and social competence. Yet, the logistical, financial, and institutional obstacles to regular and sustained contact during incarceration often hinder parental relationships.¹³ Maintaining broader family relationships during incarceration has similar challenges, but when appropriate, these relationships can be crucially important because family members often provide a large amount of tangible support to individuals during reentry.¹⁴

Practitioners working with AI/AN incarcerated parents may incorporate the following strategies to strengthen family relationships.

- **Mapping family connections and resources** can aid in reentry. Visually laying out a person's family and system connections through tools such as genograms and ecomaps can help individuals see how many supports they have and help providers learn about an individual's connections. The Bureau of Justice Assistance provides examples of these maps in its [guide](#) for using these tools with tribal members.
- **Establishing parent education programs**, such as parenting classes, talking circles, parenting support groups, relationship classes, and restorative justice classes and circles, can prepare parents for reentry.¹⁵ Established, evidence-based curricula are available for use in these programs. For example, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe uses Boys Town's Common Sense Parenting® program. The tribe links the program with Lakota parenting styles by allowing aunts, uncles, and grandparents to enroll in parenting classes as these family members play a large role in raising children in Lakota culture.
- **Ensuring the benefits of visiting** can help to maintain family connections, improve behavior among individuals who are incarcerated, and lower recidivism after release.¹⁶ The [Children of Incarcerated Parents](#) section of the youth.gov website has resources for visiting, including a [tip sheet](#) for corrections staff that includes these items:
 - Making visiting rules and dress codes easily accessible to families on the facility website
 - Having child-friendly books or other activities in waiting rooms

Resource Highlight



The Department of Justice's [Model Practices for Parents in Prisons and Jails: Reducing Barriers to Family Connections](#) provides detailed strategies for ways correctional facilities can decrease barriers to family connections while maintaining a safe and secure environment.

– Warning children a few minutes before the visit ends that the visiting time is almost over
When in-person visits are not possible, correctional agencies and others may consider providing free or subsidized phone or video calls for families to stay connected.

- **Helping parents address legal barriers** may help reduce a stressor for family connections. The [Office of Child Support Enforcement](#) offers resources to assist with modification of child support orders for eligible parents who are incarcerated. The youth.gov website also has a [guide for parents](#) on navigating the child welfare system. For broader legal challenges, such as criminal record clearance, the [Clean Slate Clearinghouse](#) has contact information for legal aid organizations by state.

Youth

AI/AN youth experience higher rates of incarceration than the national average,¹⁷ and the need for additional services to support AI/AN youth development is large.¹⁸

AI/AN-Specific Funding and Technical Assistance

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention awards [funding](#) for federally recognized tribes under its Tribal Youth Program and Tribal Juvenile Healing to Wellness Courts programs. From fiscal years 2017 to 2019, this office awarded almost \$27 million total in grant funding to improve outcomes for tribal youth.

- The **Tribal Youth Program** provides flexible grant funding that allows tribes to improve their juvenile justice systems and support prevention, intervention, and treatment approaches that benefit youth while meeting the unique needs of specific tribes.
- The **Tribal Juvenile Healing to Wellness Courts** program grants funding for participating courts to develop or strengthen their policies, procedures, and services that address underage drinking and substance use. These courts generally incorporate tribal values such as spirituality and connection to family and community when working with youth.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention also has a [Tribal Youth Resource Center](#) for federally recognized tribes to receive training and technical assistance in formats including email, phone, and in-person site visits. The website has a [virtual library](#) with resources on topics affecting youth, such as mentoring and suicide prevention.

Training tailored for individuals working with rural Alaska Native youth is available through [The Resource Basket](#). This organization offers regular trainings and provides phone and online consultations and access to other youth-serving partners and tribal organizations. [Youth.gov](#), a website designed

Spotlight: Alaska Native Justice Center

Through grant funding from the [Administration for Native Americans](#), the Alaska Native Justice Center partnered with the Anchorage Division of Juvenile Justice to provide youth in detention with relevant programming, case management, community connections, and leadership development skills. Through these services, the center plans to improve the long-term health and outcomes of these youth.

specifically for providers working with youth, also has resources and information on evidence-based programs related to [AI/AN youth](#) in the juvenile justice system.

Additional Resources

Practitioners may identify effective programs and practices for justice-involved youth by examining existing successful programs. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has a [Model Programs Guide](#) that provides information about evidence-based juvenile justice, youth prevention, intervention, and reentry programs. The office also has a reentry guide for youth, [Reentry Starts Here: A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile Corrections and Treatment Programs](#). Although not specific to AI/AN youth, this tool kit addresses steps and tools for young people planning for reentry and returning to their community.

Women

Overall, women are seeing large growth rates in incarceration.¹⁹ Moreover, women account for significantly more of the incarcerated AI/AN population at 20 percent, compared with the overall incarcerated population, which is only 13 percent female.²⁰

Returning women can face challenges that differ from those typically faced by men. Gender can be important to consider in programming and services as well as in risk and needs assessments. Using a tool specifically developed for women can be helpful. The spotlight highlights a gender-responsive substance use program offered by the South Dakota Women's Prison.

Additional information about gender-responsive reentry services includes these resources:

- [Reentry Considerations for Justice Involved Women](#), developed by the National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women, describes case management techniques and provides examples of gender-responsive programs and practices for justice-involved women.
- [After Incarceration: A Guide to Helping Women Reenter the Community](#), produced by SAMHSA, includes a checklist of considerations for providers working with reentering women. Similar to this resource guide, the document provides information and resources for providers working with women involved in the criminal justice system by topic area, such as substance use and family relationships.

Spotlight: South Dakota Women's Prison

The South Dakota Women's Prison, which has a substantial Native American population, offers an Intensive Methamphetamine Treatment Program. The program is reserved for women with high substance use needs who meet the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.) criteria for a severe methamphetamine diagnosis and who are motivated to address their substance use issues. This program is gender responsive and includes aspects of trauma-informed care to meet the women's needs. It consists of four phases completed in cohorts of about 10 participants. **Phase 1** is a collaborative effort with the health department that provides medical services within the prison system. This phase focuses on detoxification

services for those in need of this care. **Phase 2** lasts approximately 14 weeks and includes 13.5 hours of group meetings per week, consisting of four evidence-based substance use disorder treatment curricula to address the treatment needs of the incarcerated population. The last two phases are completed in the community, with **Phase 3** occurring at a low-intensity residential treatment facility. This phase focuses on reentry planning, including finding housing for individuals in need of it. **Phase 4** provides after-care services focusing on relapse prevention after women are released to their own residences.

Concrete Needs and Supports

Identification

Returning community members have an immediate need to obtain identification (ID). This step is often required before housing, employment, and health care needs can be met. Many individuals may lose important documents such as their government ID, birth certificate, and Social Security card during incarceration. Others may not have had these documents before incarceration. Challenges of accessing these documents can include these:

- Costs associated with requesting these documents
- Identification or proof of residency needed to obtain other documents
- Processing times²¹

Before release, correctional facilities can help with this process by making sure an individual has a Social Security card and a state-issued ID card or a correctional facility identification card that can be exchanged for a state-issued card.²²

AI/AN individuals may need help accessing tribal ID cards and other forms of identification:

- **Tribal ID cards:** Tribes handle requests for tribal ID cards directly. The requirements and paperwork vary by tribe. While federally recognized tribal-issued photo ID cards can be used in airports and Indian Health Service locations, these cards do not count as a valid form of ID in all places. Thus, an individual will often need to obtain additional identification.²³
- **Birth certificates:** Birth certificates are issued at the state level. Find the contact information for the office in your state that handles these requests and the associated costs on the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website](#).
- **Social Security cards:** Social Security cards are issued by the Social Security Administration and can be requested through a paper form. In certain states, individuals can request a replacement card online. The [Social Security Administration](#) provides more information about both methods.
- **State-issued identification or driver's licenses:** Procedures for obtaining identification vary by state. Some states do not issue IDs if an individual has outstanding criminal debt. More information about state requirements, including payment plans to pay off criminal debt in some states, can be found through usa.gov/motor-vehicle-services. Additionally, the Georgia Justice Project created a [list of identification laws](#) specific to reentering populations by state as of 2017. This list contains details on the state processes for returning community members to receive an ID card and links to relevant state websites.

Stable Housing

Studies identify housing as one of the most important factors in effective reentry for AI/AN individuals, as well as the most difficult one to address. AI/AN returning community members commonly return to overcrowded and inadequate housing situations, particularly on reservations.²⁴ Approximately 16 percent of AI/AN households experience overcrowding, compared with 2 percent of U.S. households overall.²⁵

Reentry organizations can help by solidifying their knowledge of local, state, and federal housing assistance programs and resources to be fully equipped to inform and support their clients. Within this context, reentry organizations can familiarize themselves with each client's individual and familial housing situations early on. Housing concerns can influence many other issues, including substance use, employment, and health. For example, the remoteness and isolation of many reservation homes presents a challenge in reaching social services.

Another important aspect of safe housing to consider is the potential for clients to be placed in challenging situations where exposure to alcohol and drug use and possibly abuse may be unavoidable. On this note, needs assessments may involve familiarizing oneself with the client's social support networks and the impact of these relationships on the client's housing situation.

These housing resources from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) may be useful for reentry planning.

- **To assist with finding housing and shelter in tribal communities,** HUD's Office of Native American Programs has a list of regional offices where providers can access contact information for tribes and tribally designated housing entities:
 - [Alaska Office of Native American Programs](#)
 - [Northwest Office of Native American Programs](#)
 - [Northern Plains Office of Native American Programs](#)
 - [Eastern Woodlands Office of Native American Programs](#)
 - [Southern Plains Office of Native American Programs](#)
 - [Southwest Office of Native American Programs](#)

Spotlight: The Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Through the [Reintegration Program](#) paid for through tribal funding, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation has a 36-bed housing facility for returning community members without housing and provides rental assistance for individuals in the program living off-site. To be eligible for housing services, individuals must have a felony conviction, be an enrolled Creek citizen, reside within Muscogee (Creek) Nation jurisdiction, and be within six months before their release or two years after their release. Individuals receiving off-site rental assistance must also have full-time employment.

- **To assist with finding housing and shelter off reservation**, HUD has a [directory](#) of Continuum of Care providers that provide assistance to individuals who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, as well as a [shelter search tool](#).
- **Criminal records can be a barrier to housing**, and [guidance](#) specifies when housing providers' use of criminal records may violate the Fair Housing Act.
- **Public housing agencies can take an active role in providing reentry housing**, and a [guide](#) released by HUD describes three housing models that public housing agencies have implemented.

Substance Use and Mental Health Needs

Addressing substance use is crucial for successful reentry because of the vast adverse effects of substance use at the individual and community level. Alcohol is the most widespread substance used in AI/AN communities and contributes to a wide array of negative effects. For example, among AI/AN populations, four of the top 10 causes of death are alcohol related. Drug use is also common. In 2019, over 10 percent of AI/AN adults had a substance use disorder.²⁶

In terms of mental health needs, approximately 37 percent of individuals in prisons and 44 percent of those in jail have been told by a mental health professional that they had a mental disorder. These numbers rise to 48 and 56 percent, respectively, for individuals who are incarcerated in the "other" race category, which includes AI/AN populations.²⁷ The high prevalence of mental health and substance use disorders among this population shows the demand for services to address these needs during reentry. Incorporating culture and tradition into services can be a key aspect of addressing substance use and mental health needs. More information on this is available in the Culturally Responsive Programs section of this resource guide.

Identifying and Serving Individuals at High Risk for Repeat Offenses: The Recidivism Reduction Initiative

[The Recidivism Reduction Initiative screening tool](#) is an evidence-based best practice instrument that has been shown to be effective in identifying individuals with a high risk of recidivism and a substance use disorder and/or a serious mental illness. The tool provides a narrative report describing a person's risk of recidivism and identifying the person's most pressing needs, which helps providers determine the appropriate services. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and Chestnut Health Systems, the owner of the tool, continually expand on it to best meet tribal needs and have added components that assess a person's level of engagement with their AI/AN community and culture.

Spotlight: Lower Brule Sioux Tribe

For the Lower Brule Sioux Tribes in Lower Brule, South Dakota, an on-site addiction counselor and mental health practitioner administer the Recidivism Reduction Initiative screening to community members who are justice-involved at the tribal court. The judge reviews the results and determines court-ordered programming, including Lakota culture classes. When individuals graduate from required programming, the court holds a graduation ceremony in the courtroom, inviting families of the graduates, which they have found to be very powerful.

Eight tribes currently use the tool, which carries a fee based on the type of screener an organization is interested in and the number of users.²⁸

Resources from SAMHSA

SAMHSA's [Technology Transfer Centers](#) provide resources and technical assistance with behavioral health care, substance use, and mental health services.

- The Technology Transfer Centers include the [Addiction Technology Transfer Centers](#), the [Mental Health Technology Transfer Centers](#), and the [Prevention Technology Transfer Centers](#). Each center provides AI/AN-specific resources such as webinars, listening sessions, and guides.
- The Addiction Technology Transfer Centers and the Mental Health Technology Transfer Centers provide resources for peer support in tribal communities. These resources can be used in a variety of settings, including correctional facilities. One [webinar](#) describes how to establish, certify, and supervise peer supports.

[Tribal Action Plans](#) coordinate programs and resources with technical assistance from SAMHSA to help tribes prevent and address substance use issues in their community. [Guidelines, development resources](#), and information about [training and technical assistance opportunities](#) are all available online.

SAMHSA has several funding opportunities related to substance use and mental health that may be of interest to tribes and organizations working in this space, such as the Tribal Opioid Response grants and the Offender Reentry Program grants. Grant funding opportunities are listed on the SAMHSA [website](#). SAMHSA also has a four-page [guide](#) listing many resources that may be useful for organizations working with individuals with substance use and/or mental disorders. The guide includes helpful websites, such as SAMHSA's substance use and behavioral health [treatment locator](#). Additionally, providers looking for implementation strategies to promote a successful reentry for this population may find SAMHSA's [Guidelines for Successful Transition of People with Mental and Substance Use Disorders from Jail and Prison: Implementation Guide](#) helpful.

Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts

Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts are specialized tribal courts focused on alcohol and substance use that oversee or supervise an individual's drug treatment and other program involvement, including supportive services such as case management. Similar to drug courts, Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts can offer an alternative to incarceration. These courts can work with specific populations, such as youth in the juvenile justice system. More information on these courts is in the Youth section of this resource guide. Through funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Tribal Law and Policy Institute has a [website](#) that offers training, technical assistance, and resources to help develop new Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts and strengthen existing programs. Additionally, SAMHSA has ongoing [grants](#) to provide funding for adult Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts.

Other Important Considerations

- **Protective factors:** Recognizing protective factors and knowing the specific details of each client's community and social supports can be helpful. Some members of AI/AN populations may reside in environments where their social support systems accept or even encourage substance use.²⁹ Familiarizing oneself with the ways a client's support system can be protective and detrimental can be useful.
- **Tailor services to population needs:** While many incarcerated and returning community members struggle with substance use, their level of need for services, motivation to change, types of substances used, and length of time under correctional supervision will likely vary. Tailoring service type and intensity by population characteristics rather than offering the same substance use treatment services for everyone can be helpful to improve outcomes. An example of how the South Dakota Women's Prison does this is provided in the Women section of this resource guide.
- **Prioritize existing social support:** Reentry organizations may want to prioritize family and social support. For example, children often played a crucial role in motivating their mothers throughout the recovery process.³⁰

Other Health Needs

AI/AN populations have disproportionately high rates of diabetes, heart disease, and injury.³¹ Populations on reservations are 524 percent more likely to die from alcoholism and 293 percent more likely to die from diabetes than the general U.S. population. These extreme disparities may arise in part from structural factors rooted in centuries of historical trauma and distress, as well as from adverse childhood experiences. Most AI/AN individuals report occasionally thinking of historical traumas, which contributes to their psychological distress.³² Incarcerated and returning community members have more intensive health needs than the general population. AI/AN populations and individuals who are incarcerated also experienced disproportionate incidences of COVID-19 cases.³³ Providers can consider the following strategies and programs to help address the health needs of this population in culturally appropriate ways.

- **Preventative care:** In light of frequently low screening rates among AI/AN populations, reentry specialists may want to emphasize the importance of preventative care and screening. Needs assessments identifying clients' risk factors, such as smoking, can help to identify areas where care and screenings are particularly needed upon reentry.³⁴
 - Programs such as the Indian Health Service's [Injury Prevention Program](#) integrate tribal leadership to craft prevention programs that emphasize community roots. For example, the program addresses motor vehicle accident safety by utilizing "community education and tribal enforcement of seat belt use and avoidance of drunk driving."³⁵
- **Community Health Representative (CHR) program:** Reentry organizations may utilize community members through the Indian Health Service's [CHR program](#) to promote health among individuals

they serve. The program incorporates AI/AN identity and participation in addressing community health needs through a one-on-one, long-term model of connection.

- CHRs provide health promotion assistance, offer education support, and perform home visits particularly for elderly groups and young mothers.
- CHRs work with parents to gain knowledge and skills to promote healthy development and positive lifestyles for themselves and their children using [Family Spirit](#), a culturally tailored home-visiting program of the [Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health](#).
- CHRs are trained health care paraprofessionals who are themselves members of the Indigenous community they are serving. Tribal organizations who adopt the CHR model may tailor the program to their unique needs based on initial evaluations and needs assessments. Most CHR programs are tribally operated.
- The Indian Health Service also offers the [Community Health Aide Program](#), a system of 550 community health aides/practitioners who provide services in AI/AN communities nationally.
 - In accordance with needs assessment and treatment protocols, the aides/practitioners work alongside health providers such as physicians, and they receive extensive training to serve as community health, behavioral health, or dental aides.
- **COVID-19:** The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) website provides information on assistance that may be available for returning community members being released during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance also covers how correctional facilities can minimize the spread of COVID-19 and information for individuals with incarcerated family members.
 - Health insurance coverage: Individuals preparing for release or recently released can see if they are eligible for free or low-cost health coverage through Medicaid in their state. Correctional facilities may help with this process before release. Individuals not eligible for Medicaid may want to enroll in health coverage on the [Marketplace](#). After release from incarceration, an individual has a 60-day special enrollment period to apply for coverage outside of the annual open enrollment period. The Marketplace website provides more details about [health coverage for individuals who are incarcerated](#).

Education Programs

Educational attainment is a large challenge in the AI/AN community, with only 74 percent of AI/AN public high school students graduating, the lowest rate of all demographic groups.³⁶ Education is particularly important for individuals involved in the criminal justice system. Receiving educational services during incarceration decreased the risk of recidivism and improved chances for finding employment after release.³⁷

Education in Bureau of Indian Affairs Juvenile Justice Facilities

Youth involved in the **juvenile justice system** are guaranteed access to education through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.³⁸ At the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services juvenile facilities, education services are provided year-round and include educational assessment, proper grade placement, and assistance with school enrollment after release. These services include special education services for juveniles with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Preparation for the General Educational Development (GED) exam and the HiSET high school equivalency exam is available for juveniles. GED or HiSET prep is provided through the blended learning instructional model. Blended instruction is a web-based education program with certified teachers that integrates both traditional instruction and technology.

A few key components of providing **GED or HiSET preparation services in correctional facilities** can be considered.

- **Verification of a juvenile's eligibility** to take the GED or HiSET is necessary. Each state has its own criteria.
- **Access to the appropriate technology** includes internet access, computers, and licenses or ownership of GED or HiSET prep software in the correctional facility.
- **On-site instructors**, outside of correctional staff, who can oversee these services.
- **A designated GED testing site** is necessary. Correctional facilities unable to become a test site themselves, may arrange for transportation of incarcerated students to a test-taking facility.
- **The GED testing fee** varies depending on the state. For youth in Bureau of Indian Affairs juvenile facilities, the Office of Justice Services pays this fee.

The Chief Ignacio Justice Center located in Towaoc, Colorado, and operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs is an example of this work. This facility provides GED prep for its juveniles. Initially, the facility partnered with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Education Department, which sent a GED teacher into the facility weekly. Starting in 2014, the Bureau of Indian Affairs education contractor assumed responsibility for teaching GED prep coursework to eligible juveniles.

The Chief Ignacio Justice Center assesses juveniles before GED or HiSET instruction starts. This step allows the teacher to customize a juvenile's pathway to the GED or HiSET. Practice tests are provided for remediation to improve a juvenile's chance of passing the GED or HiSET. Juveniles are not allowed to

Spotlight: Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Department of Corrections

The Salt River Department of Corrections in Arizona provides a variety of educational services at its facility. GED preparation classes are offered for adults. Since the facility is an approved testing site, students can take the GED exam at the facility when they are ready. Salt River also provides one-on-one and group academic coaching sessions twice a week to help adults address academic barriers, receive tutoring for coursework, and peer mentoring. For postsecondary education, individuals in the facility can attend college courses at Rio Salado College through correspondence. Additionally, the facility offers college career workshops and resume writing and job search assistance.

take the official GED or HiSET test until the education contractor and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services are confident the juvenile has a good chance of passing all the subtests of the GED or HiSET.

Additional Education Resources

The U.S. Department of Education developed a [Reentry Education Framework](#) and a [Reentry Education Tool Kit](#) that can help reentry education providers working with adults develop a continuum from facility programs to community-based education programs. Topics covered in the framework and tool kit include strategic partnerships, education services, and transition processes.

Postsecondary education programs exist in some jails and prisons. More information about postsecondary education funding, offerings, restrictions, incentives and supports in correctional facilities can be found in the Council of State Governments report [Laying the Groundwork: How States Can Improve Access to Continued Education for People in the Criminal Justice System](#) and the Vera Institute of Justice report [Making the Grade: Developing Quality Postsecondary Education in Prison](#).³⁹

Employment and Other Financial Needs

Returning community members often face barriers to employment due to their criminal record. Compounding this challenge are the needs for transportation to and from employment and the requirement of drug tests at some jobs given high rates of substance use in this population. Returning AI/AN community members cited discrimination from potential employers due to having a criminal record and being AI/AN as creating challenges in obtaining employment.⁴⁰

Resources to help with employment of returning community members at the federal level include the following:

- [Veterans Programs](#), including assistance finding employment and receiving relevant training, can be used for certain returning Veterans. Some benefits are specific to [AI/AN populations](#).
- [The Federal Bonding Program](#) provides bonds to protect employers from any losses due to the employee committing crimes such as theft or embezzlement for the first six months of employment. Individuals who qualify for the program include individuals who are justice-involved, individuals in recovery from substance use disorders,

Spotlight: Gila River Department of Rehabilitation and Supervision

The Gila River Department of Rehabilitation and Supervision in Arizona is the primary jail facility for arrests by the Gila River Indian Community Police Department and other law enforcement operating on tribal lands. Through the Gila River Indian Community Employment and Training Department, funded by federal and state contracts, the jail provides a variety of employment and training services to eligible incarcerated populations. These services include soft skills training such as budgeting and conflict resolution skills, certifications in career areas, occupational/vocational training, and apprenticeships.

welfare recipients, individuals with poor credit records, economically disadvantaged youth and adults who lack work histories, and individuals dishonorably discharged from the military. The bonds can be requested through your state's bonding coordinator.

- [Clean Slate Clearinghouse](#) provides individuals with criminal records resources and information regarding clearance policies in their state and contact information for legal services providers.
- [The Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#) provides a federal tax credit to employers when hiring individuals from certain backgrounds. One of the target groups is individuals convicted of a felony.
- [Reentry Employment Opportunities](#) are grants offered by the U.S. Department of Labor for organizations to help returning youth and adults improve their workforce outcomes.

Other Financial Needs

Addressing financial challenges beyond employment, such as establishing good credit, opening a bank account, and paying off debt, can be crucial for successful reentry. The [Native Community Development Financial Institutions \(CDFI\) Network](#) has programs and events to increase access to capital and resources for Native communities that might be helpful for the AI/AN population. General resources on finances for returning community members include the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's [Your Money, Your Goals: Focus on Reentry](#) guide for staff and volunteers working with justice-involved populations on their finances. The guide includes how to help individuals understand credit reports and manage money.

Individuals unable to work due to age or disability may be eligible for Social Security benefits. The Social Security Administration provides [eligibility information](#) for returning community members. Individuals applying for Social Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI) may be able to receive assistance with their application through SAMHSA's SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) program, a resource for individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or substance use disorder. The SOAR program provides trained case managers to assist with SSI/SSDI applications. More information about SOAR contacts by state can be found on the [SOAR website](#).

Appendix: Methodology

To develop this resource guide, we first conducted a literature review identifying publications on prison or jail reentry efforts for AI/AN populations. This search yielded 34 publications, which served as the basis for much of the background information and statistics on each topic. To gather information on relevant federal resources, we held phone and email conversations with individuals in multiple federal departments, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Justice. To inform the examples used throughout the guide, we had conversations with key informants from the Lower Brule Tribal Court and the South Dakota Women's Prison and Department of Social Services. We also connected over email with the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Department of Corrections and the Gila River Department of Rehabilitation and Supervision.

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