

From *The Shawshank Redemption* to *Les Misérables*, the challenges faced by individuals upon release from the criminal justice system have long been a source of inspiration for fictional stories. Yet, it feels rare that we reflect on the nonfiction reentry story.

Georgia's Supervised Population

The [Georgia Department of Community Supervision \(DCS\)](#) reports that the state has the nation's highest probation and parole supervised population, about 1 in 23 adults, compared to the national average of 1 in 66. The 191,000+ people currently under supervision in Georgia include 15,693 (8.2%) on parole (vs. probation). When people exit the parole system, they are replaced by the 13,400 average number of people released from the Georgia prison system each year.



DCS' Community Coordinators serve as supervisors and reentry support. The coordinators who assist with reentry by providing referrals to housing, employment, and mentor services have limited capacity, with an average caseload of 111 people per coordinator.

Reentry Challenges: Understanding the Roadblocks to Success

While reentry support starts during an inmate's sentence with the goal of complete rehabilitation into the community as a law-abiding citizen after release, recidivism is a common occurrence. Securing and sustaining employment and housing can be a significant challenge post-release. Adding to the challenge is the history of substance abuse and poor mental health that some formerly incarcerated people have.

Georgia's recidivism rate was 29.9 in 2021; this rate is the highest of the 12 most recent years published by the [Georgia Department of Corrections](#). While the recent history's high rate may be attributable to COVID-19's impact on society in 2021, it should be a concern rather than an anomaly to disregard.

Building a Stronger Community Through Reentry Support

Church and nonprofit service providers can bolster resources to [support formerly incarcerated people](#) and mitigate reentry challenges:

- **Employment:** The Community Coordinators work with employers to explain the benefits of hiring persons impacted by the judicial system. You can be an advocate for employers being open to hiring individuals whose criminal offense does not relate to the job. You can also reflect on what wraparound services your parish or organization may be able to support. For example, one or more of the following employment-supportive service offerings can make a significant difference in securing and sustaining employment: attaining a GED, receiving job skills training, developing resume and interview skills, acquiring work-appropriate attire, accessing transportation, and obtaining child care.
- **Housing:** Organizations can apply to provide housing for formerly incarcerated people through one of two programs in Georgia: [Transitional Housing for Offender Reentry \(THOR\)](#) or [Reentry Partnership Housing \(RPH\)](#).

- **Learn more about reentry in Georgia:** [Georgia Department of Community Supervision Reentry Services Magazine](#)



Following Christ's example and the tradition of The Episcopal Church, we partner with Episcopal communities in the Diocese of Atlanta by providing funding, leadership, and resources to enable Episcopalians to lift up people facing poverty and oppression and to achieve significant, long-lasting change in our communities.

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