



Vocabulary of Reentry

In the world of social justice reform, vocabulary is believed to be an important first step towards combatting the negative public perception of incarcerated persons. Using the right vocabulary, say advocates, is key if our goal is to help and more importantly, “humanize” those that have spent time in correctional facilities succeed when they return to their communities. Vocabulary can be a powerful tool both to improve an individual’s sense of self-worth as well as to help those of us on the outside better understand the challenges these individuals face.

- **client** – a program participant or individual who voluntarily agrees to receive referrals, resources, and/or services from the Reentry Program
- **decarceration** – the process of releasing individuals from jail/prison vs mass incarceration. Decarceration often refers to policies now in development to address who should be incarcerated? And how will communities support those that are released?
- **detention** – refers to an adult jail or juvenile detention facility
- **detainee** – an adult or juvenile housed in a detention facility
- **habilitation** – vs rehabilitation. It is the “re” before “habilitation” that many people feel is inaccurate. For a first-time “returning citizen”, their release is not a “redo” or “second chance”. Many programs are helping individuals leaving the system for the first time. Many individuals who are incarcerated come from violent environments that are neither safe or healthy and therefore, in habilitation programs, they learn self-worth for the first time.
- **incarceration** - confinement in a jail or prison
- **incarcerated person vs inmate** – The term inmate is not popular among social justice advocates. However, it is a term that is entrenched in the correctional system. Advocates are working hard to use “incarcerate person” and to eliminate the term, “inmate” to describe an adult or juvenile housed in prison/penitentiary
- **jail** – a local holding facility where an individual becomes incarcerated after arrest. This is where they are held until their ‘fate’ is determined. They will continue to be held in a jail if their sentence is a misdemeanor sentence, which is 12 months or less.
- **prison** – this is a correctional facility that someone is “shipped” or sent to after their ‘fate’ is determined by a judge. They are shipped to prison for the duration of their sentence if their sentence is a felony sentence of 1 year or more. States operate differently though with when someone is sent to prison. In Virginia for instance, people may be in the local jail for up to 2 years before being shipped, whereas other states, send individuals to prison immediately.
- **resettlement vs reentry** – in general, this is a process by which a person who has been incarcerated is released to the community. Some communities prefer one of the terms to the other. Either may be used to refer to a program designed to prepare individuals for their release, and then provide skills and resources to those who have been incarcerated or detained in jail, i.e. served detention.
- **recidivism** – the continuation of criminal behavior and reincarceration after previous confinements. For instance, someone who gets out of jail and then becomes reincarcerated is considered to have recidivated. They are a recidivist. This is recidivism.
- **referral case manager** – a Reentry member who works with the detainee/inmate to prepare them for reentry
- **returned or returning citizen** – Someone coming home to the community from detention or incarceration
- **substance use disorder** – someone who battles the disease of addiction. Historically, people with an SUD were referred to as an addict, but terminology has changed, as a means of decreasing the stigma associated with the disease.