

Second Chance Act Fact Sheet

Everyone Deserves A Second Chance

July 2015

HEARTLAND ALLIANCE
NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Summary

Signed into law on April 9, 2008, the [Second Chance Act](#) (P.L. 110-199) is designed to positively impact the life outcomes of individuals transitioning into society after experiencing incarceration. The Second Chance Act authorizes grants to state, local, and federally recognized tribal governments to provide support strategies and services designed to reduce recidivism and create opportunities for people returning from prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities. Some of the key provisions of the Second Chance Act include:

- ✓ **Offender Reentry Substance Abuse Treatment Grants** to improve the availability of drug treatment.
- ✓ **Demonstration Grants** to state, local, and tribal governments that may be used to promote safe and successful community reintegration.
- ✓ **Mentoring Grants** to nonprofit organizations that may be used for mentoring adult offenders or offering transitional services for reintegration.
- ✓ **Technology Career Training Grants** to state, local, and tribal government agencies to assist in establishing programs to train individuals in prisons, jails, or juvenile residential facilities for technology-based jobs and careers during the three-year period before their release.
- ✓ **Recidivism Reduction Grants** to state departments of correction to reduce recidivism through planning, capacity-building, and implementation of effective and evidence-based interventions.
- ✓ **National Adult and Juvenile Offender Reentry Resource Center** which establishes a [national resource center](#) to collect and disseminate best practices and to provide training and support for reentry efforts.

Allowable uses of Second Chance Act Demonstration Grant funds include:

- *Employment services*
- *Substance abuse treatment*
- *Housing*
- *Family programming*
- *Mentoring*
- *Victims services*
- *Methods to improve release and revocation decisions using risk assessment tools*

Current Legislation

In the summer of 2015, Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Rob Portman (R-OH), and Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL), Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI), and other House and Senate leaders introduced bills to reauthorize the Second Chance Act. Reauthorizing the Second Chance Act redoubles our nation's commitment to supporting the transition from incarceration to communities and reducing recidivism. It also offers opportunities to continue to add to the strength of the Second Chance Act. The bill includes provisions that will lead to even greater positive impacts on the lives of millions of Americans, including the following:

- ✓ Inclusion of nonprofit organizations as eligible grant recipients;
- ✓ Explicit language listing transitional jobs as an allowable use of Second Chance Act grants;
- ✓ A detailed definition of transitional jobs that reflects the [National Transitional Jobs Network's](#) recommendations; and
- ✓ Authorizing career training (including subsidized employment when part of a training program) for people who are incarcerated.

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Why Congress Should Reauthorize the Second Chance Act.

The Second Chance Act strengthens communities by creating opportunities for some of our most vulnerable citizens to achieve economic stability. Reauthorizing the Second Chance Act redoubles our commitment to supporting the transition from incarceration to communities and reducing recidivism.

The Second Chance Act addresses a national crisis. In the past three decades the United States has seen a [500% increase](#) in our nation's incarceration rate. There are [2.2 million](#) people residing in America's prisons and jails and each year, [more than 600,000](#) Americans return to communities from prisons and jails across the country. Many of these people are unable to find sustainable employment due to a myriad of barriers they face once released. Now more than ever comprehensive and effective reentry programming that includes employment is critical. Indeed, [research shows](#) that individuals recently released from prison who participate in a transitional job program are far less likely to recidivate. Second Chance Act reauthorization helps realize criminal justice reforms that address the crisis head on. Efforts to advance these types of reforms are rapidly gaining [national attention](#).

The Second Chance Act is an investment in evidence-based programs that have been proven to reduce recidivism. The provisions in the reauthorization bill will create even more opportunities for states and local communities to meet the employment needs of people returning from incarceration through the development of transitional jobs programs and other interventions that support successful transitions to communities for individuals returning from incarceration. Recidivism rates in several states have seen substantial reductions due to the types of [support strategies and services funded by the Second Chance Act](#). Examples of those strategies include: the use of risk assessment tools to develop individualized services designed to reduce a person's risk of reoffending; community supervision officers' use of intermediate sanctions as an alternative to incarceration for probation violators; and diversion of non-violent offenders to community supervision coupled with extensive support services. Ensuring successful reentry means both safer communities and improved use of taxpayer dollars. Transitional jobs are another promising example of the types of initiatives funded by the Second Chance Act. Transitional jobs not only create long-term savings of nearly [\\$4 for every \\$1](#) spent, but they have also been [proven](#) to reduce recidivism rates; reduce reliance on public benefits and lower tax payer costs; improve educational outcomes for dependent children; create positive economic ripple effects in communities by increasing local demand for goods and services; and benefit employers by increasing productivity, financial well-being, and customer satisfaction.

We encourage members of Congress to cosponsor the Second Chance Act today and move forward toward swift passage of this important legislation.

For more information about the Second Chance Act, we encourage you to visit the [National Reentry Resource Center](#) at the Council of State Governments Justice Center.

Heartland Alliance's National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity is dedicated to ending chronic unemployment and poverty.

Through our field building, we provide support and guidance that fosters more effective and sustainable employment efforts. Our policy and advocacy work advances solutions to the systemic issues that drive chronic unemployment. **We believe that every person deserves the opportunity to succeed in work and support themselves and their families.** Working at the intersection of practice, policy and research, we catalyze change that is practical, informed by evidence and grounded in experience.

For more information or to get involved, please contact NI@heartlandalliance.org