

Perspectives on Community Reentry Programs and Their Impacts on Occupational Performance Postincarceration

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PURPOSE: There is a paucity of criminal and occupational justice research regarding the nature of reentry services available to reentrants and its complexity through an occupational therapy lens. [1] There remains the need to understand the type and extent of services provided by reentry organizations as the literature suggests the current supports provided to reentrants are too simplistic. [2] The aim of this study was to examine service providers and reentrants' perspectives of community reentry programs and their impact on occupational performance. The research questions included 'How do key stakeholders of reentry programs define the scope of service provision, perceive the impact of their services, and understand the occupational performance of those who use their services?' and 'How do returning citizens who utilize reentry services post incarceration perceive their occupational performance and the effectiveness of reentry services?'

DESIGN: A phenomenological inquiry research design was implemented. [3] Adult participants were recruited through local, citizen reentry programs using convenient and snowball sampling. A total of five reentry service providers (3 female, 2 male) and four reentrants (2 female and 2 male) provided data for analysis.

METHOD: Semi-structured interviews were completed with all participants. We completed the initial coding of data from the service providers and the reentrants. Finding similar constructs between both groups, we then completed four rounds of focused, axial coding of all transcripts. [4] Credibility and trustworthiness were addressed through investigator triangulation, audit trails, field notes and member checking.

RESULTS: The two broad contexts, Barriers and Successful Integration situated the four main themes. Barriers include access to employment, housing, and mental health treatment. Successful Integration is described as a more complete and manageable life for the reentrants. Themes include Appreciating Reentrants' Narratives and a Person-Centered Approach which recognizes the importance of understanding each reentrant's life, strengths, and occupational challenges. Networking and Relationships highlights the necessity for strong community support in this journey of reentry. Process & Transformation emphasizes the personal change made through the reentry process and provides insights into the complexity of moving from the prison system to becoming integrated into the community.

CONCLUSION: The service providers described offering mental health support, assisting with employment, securing basic immediate needs, and lending general moral support and encouragement to reentrants. They perceived the reentrants' occupational performance needs as stability in their daily routines while expanding necessary roles. Reentrants reflected on their occupational performance, which included obtaining employment and mental health stability and adapting to the demands of society, however, occupational engagement was often complex and difficult due to the occupational demands and environments of their new, post incarceration roles. In all, service providers and reentrants highlighted the interdependence of social environments, personalized approaches, mental health, and motivating factors impacting engagement in reentry-related occupations. The results suggest implications for occupational therapy intervention with those reentering society after incarceration. Beyond the global needs for housing, employment, and mental health services that have been identified in the literature, this study emphasizes that reentrants are on a journey of engagement with new roles which often require time, resources, and support in the integration of those roles and occupations.

References

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