



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Re-entry and Correctional Mental Health Groups

These groups serve people transitioning out of incarceration and back into community life. The period right after release is one of the highest-risk in a person's life: overdose, suicide, and return to incarceration all spike, driven by abrupt loss of treatment and structure, the practical barriers of rebuilding housing and documents, and the weight of a justice-involved identity in a society that stigmatizes it. Mental health needs are substantial, and care inside is often inadequate. Groups take several forms: peer support led by formerly incarcerated people, and clinical treatment groups (CBT, Seeking Safety) embedded in reentry programs.

WHO IT'S FOR, AND WHO IT'S NOT

- A fit for anyone navigating reentry, especially those who distrust clinics.
- Some do better in groups for women, serious mental illness, or their community.
- Severe acute psychiatric needs may require individual care first.

What it's for

People at any stage, from pre-release planning to years after release.

For housing, employment, documents, and managing mental health in community.

For building prosocial connections and navigating record-related stigma.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 Peer groups meet weekly or biweekly, 60 to 90 minutes, in community settings.

2 The informal, non-clinical setting is intentional for those wary of institutions.

3 Many add case management, housing navigation, and practical support.

Peer-led reentry support has a growing, encouraging evidence base.

- A scoping review of 47 studies found reentry peer support improved **mental health, reduced substance use and recidivism**, and improved healthcare and housing connection.¹
- An evaluation of a Louisiana peer-led model found it reached **needs standard services had failed to engage**, showing the value of lived experience.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

Lived credibility. A facilitator who's been there may be the one you trust.

Practical and proven. Peers know how to navigate reentry, not just discuss it.

Community, not clinic. The setting is chosen to feel like your own networks.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1** Is it peer-led by formerly incarcerated people, or clinician-led?
- 2** Does it offer practical help (housing, documents) alongside support?
- 3** Does it meet in a community space or a clinical one?

Ready to find a group?

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If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact. Sources on page 2.



Sources

Re-entry and Correctional Mental Health Groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Treitler, P., DiGioia-Laird, V., & Long, B. Peer support services for individuals with health-related needs reentering the community after incarceration: a scoping review of program elements and outcomes. *Health and Justice* (2025), 13(1), Article 51.
- 2 Boles, W., Tatum, T., Wall, J., et al. Us helping us: the evolution of a peer support group for formerly incarcerated people. *Frontiers in Psychiatry* (2022), 13, Article 920640.

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