Reentry Simulation (Pierce County Washington)

Resource Packet Preparation

Prepare one packet for each participant (standard envelopes will work well). Each packet should contain between 0-30 cards of various colors. We cut our cards to 1.5" X 2.5;" with this size 1 sheet of paper yields 20 cards.You may use any 3 colors for the cards; for our simulation, we used these:

- Green cards = money
- Blue cards = services
- Red cards = favors

Vary the number and types of cards you include in each packet. Be sure to include at least 1 empty envelope, 1 with only service cards, 1 with only money, and 1 with only favors. The table below offers some ways to distribute cards. Whether setting up 10 or 50 packets, the key is to ensure that participants receive a wide range of resources in order to simulate the reality that reentry is vastly more challenging for individuals with limited resources.

Packet	Green	Blue	Red
1	30	0	10
2	20	5	5
3	10	0	5
4	10	0	0
5	5	2	10
6	5	5	0
7	5	0	0
8	0	10	0
9	0	5	5
10	0	0	0

Finally set up 2 "outlier" packets.

- The "Abundance" outlier packet contains: 30 of each type of ticket
- The "Who you Know" outlier packet contains: a slip of paper with these words:

  ***On one side**: GET OUT OF JAIL FREE*

  ***On the other side:** Oh you poor dear, you must have been in the wrong place at the wrong time! I play golf with your mother (our esteemed state representative) at the country club and am well aware of the terrible impact this could have on your future. Please come to the front of the room and show me this "get out of jail free" card.*

Room Preparation

Designate one section of the room as a waiting area for people who are out of options. Place a chair near the front of the room for the "get out of jail free" recipient. Put out one container (a large mason jar works well) for each type of card and mark the containers with labels for "money" "services," or "favors." Place these containers some distance apart in the room.

Facilitator Instructions

1. You may choose to begin the exercise by asking participants to BRIEFLY introduce themselves. If the group is large or composed of people who already know one another, simply start with step 2.
2. Explain the exercise purpose and instructions; then begin the simulation.
3. Manage time to leave at least 15 minutes at the end of the exercise for debriefing and dialog.

Note: Allow 30-45 minutes to complete the exercise & debrief. Consider something like the script below:

Purpose of Exercise

The purpose of this exercise is to raise awareness of the struggles and challenges faced by people returning to the community after incarceration. You may already have your own perspective on reentry issues; however, this simulation invites you to walk in the shoes of someone who is navigating the journey home.

Following the simulation, we will have an opportunity to talk about the experience.

Instructions to Participants

To realistically depict the variations of resources available to individuals upon release, each envelope contains a set of cards that represent the resources that are available to your character. Each of you will be given a different number of cards. **Green cards** represent money, **red cards** represent favors, and **blue cards** represent community programs and services available in your area.

Throughout the exercise, you will be asked a series of questions. To answer the questions, you must select one of the given choices by depositing your cards in the corresponding containers that will be placed in sections around the room. Once you have made your choice, please remain in that section until the next question is asked. If you choose an option that requires the use of two different cards, you may stay in either section.

At any point in the exercise if you find that you cannot answer a question due to lack of resources, you may NOT accept cards from another participant and you must move to the "No Options" section of the room. At this point, you are OUT of the exercise. If you are one of the first people without options, please consider sharing your perceptions about this at the end of the exercise.

Remember, each participant's situation in the simulation is different based on a variety of circumstances; from community support, to social capital, to reentry programs. Make your choices wisely!

The Exercise

Before asking the first question: Once everyone has a packet, ask participants to check to see what resources they have. Invite the participant with the "Get Out of Jail Free" card to the front of the room. Have them sit in a chair and fuss over them. "We've all made mistakes"; "Are you comfortable?" etc. You may even want to offer them refreshments while they wait for their mother to arrive.

1. You have just been released from prison or jail and are standing outside. Where are you going to sleep tonight?
    a. Marriott Hotel (8 money cards)
    b. Golden Lion Motor Inn (3 money cards)
    c. Friends and Family (3 favor cards)
    d. Nativity House Shelter or Tacoma Rescue Mission (1 service card)

2. Now that you have found a place to stay you need food, clothing, and other basic needs. How will you get these items?
    a. Purchase food at the grocery store and a few clothes at Target or several items at Goodwill (4 money cards)
    b. Food bank and Clothing room at Nativity House or My Sister's Pantry (2 service cards)
    c. Get items from family and friends (3 favor cards)

Facilitator question: Is there anyone who is out of options? What happened?

3. You need to meet with your probation/parole officer. The office is on the other side of town. How will you get there?
    a. Pierce County Transit (1 money card)
    b. Ask a Friend to drive you there and back (2 favor cards)
    c. Department of Corrections ORCA card (1 service card)

4. Your conditions of release require counseling services. The counselor's office is in Parkland. How will you get there?
    a. Pierce County Transit (1 money card)
    b. Ask a Friend to drive you there and back (3 favor cards)
    c. Department of Corrections ORCA card (1 service card)

Facilitator Note: Mention how many people are now in the no-options group (i.e. 10 out of 30 people in the group). Note that (so far) the required steps have been fairly simple, but some people have already run out of cards. So far the only tasks were finding a place to stay, getting food and clothing, meeting with a probation/parole and attending a counseling session.

5. You are running out of medication. What do you do?
    a. Go to the pharmacy to buy more medication (5 money cards)
    b. Borrow money from family or friends (4 favor cards)
    c. SeaMar or Neighborhood Free Clinic (1 service card)
    d. Go off medication (NO CARDS but penalties apply)

Facilitator Note: Tell participants, *"For those who went off their medication, each future action will "cost" twice as much. The extra cost represents the addition obstacles faced without needed medications."* Then say, *"Congratulations, you've made it through your first 72 hours of reentry."*

6. After two weeks of couch surfing, you've run out of friends to stay with. Where will you go?
   Penalties = Double Payment if off medications
   a. Marriott Hotel (8 money cards)
   b. Golden Lion Motor Inn (3 money cards)
   c. Nativity House or Tacoma Rescue Mission (1 service card)
   d. Homeless (NO CARDS but penalties apply)

7. Your sister has temporary custody of your 2 children. She lives in King County. You have finally arranged for a visit with your children. How will you get there?
   Penalties = Double Payment if off medications or homeless
   a. Pierce & Sound Transit (2 money cards)
   b. Friends and Family (1 favor card + 1 money card) *they need gas money*
   c. St Leo Emergency Services (1 service card)

8. You keep applying for jobs, but, no-one will hire you. You start to feel hopeless and need some support. Where do you go?
   Penalties = Double Payment if off medications or homeless
   a. For-profit employment agency training (5)
   b. Friends and Family (4 favor cards)
   c. Goodwill Milgard Work Opportunity Center (1 service card)

Facilitator Note: Encourage participants to observe how many people are in the "no options" category after only eight steps. Invite everyone to return to their seats.

End of Exercise: Suggested Discussion Questions

- For the well-connected participant: What are your observations or reflections?
- For participants who still had options when the simulation ended: What are your observations or reflections?
- For those who were given empty envelopes: What are your observations or reflections?
- For those who ran out of options: What are your observations or reflections?

If there is time, here are some additional questions:

- Did anything about the exercise surprise you?
- Which resources (money, favors, or services) seemed most important in the exercise? Does this reflect your own experience?
- Check for understanding about meaning of network poverty, recidivism and reentry. Then ask: From your character's vantage point, what is the difference between a recidivism problem and a reentry problem?

Recidivism refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime. Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that result in re-arrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following release. National Institute of Justice

This simulation was developed by New Connections, Tacoma. Please feel free to use and adapt the simulation for your own purposes. We ask that you acknowledge New Connections in your materials just as we now acknowledge our inspiration for this workshop: an exercise developed in 2006 by the International Association of Chiefs of Police for the National Policy Summit on Offender Re-Entry.