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# **GUIDE FOR THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS**

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# GUIDE FOR THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

## Introduction

The social reintegration<sup>1</sup> of formerly incarcerated people and the related concepts used here – such as (re)insertion, (re)inclusion, (res)socialization, (re)education, social (re)adaptation, and (re)habilitation<sup>2</sup> – is a global challenge that requires reforms in the justice system, strengthening of the rule of law, and implementation of specific public policies. This guide synthesizes the strategies adopted by reentry programs in various countries, including Brazil, which can serve as models for implementing and improving initiatives worldwide.

Brazil ranks third globally in the absolute number of incarcerated individuals,<sup>3</sup> reflecting the social, racial, and educational inequalities within its prison population. This highlights the selective nature of the justice system, which predominantly imprisons young, low-educated Black individuals.<sup>4</sup> Upon release, justice-impacted persons face numerous challenges, including limited access to support and assistance programs, which are often concentrated in capital cities.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is crucial to invest in overcoming this scenario through the implementation and improvement

of programs and strategies, taking into account regional specificities and significant variations in incarceration rates among states.

Without adequate preparation and material, financial, psychological, and social support, the challenges of social reintegration can become insurmountable obstacles. This not only makes communities less safe but also contributes to criminal recidivism, creating a vicious cycle of crime and social rejection. This dynamic exacerbates the adversities and vulnerabilities faced by individuals throughout their lives, from before incarceration to after release.

It is worth noting that the inclusion of formerly incarcerated individuals still receives substantially lower investments than other public security areas. While police enforcement receives the majority of resources, post-release reintegration programs are neglected. In 2022, R\$53.3 billion was allocated to policing, R\$12.7 billion to prisons, but post-release programs received only R\$12 million.<sup>6</sup>

This guide was developed to help reverse this scenario by adopting a rights-based perspective. Its goal is to assist in implementing and enhancing initiatives for formerly incarcerated individuals across the country. Based on the analysis of 123 national and international programs focused on post-incarceration support<sup>7</sup> (including programs for children and adolescents who have completed socio-educational measures), this document outlines the objectives of these programs and details the strategies they employ.

To better understand this guide, it is essential to familiarize yourself with the following glossary:



## GLOSSARY



### PROGRAM



Initiatives implemented by governments, civil society, public-private partnerships, academia, social enterprises,<sup>8</sup> and religious associations.



### PURPOSE



The declared objective of the programs.



### STRATEGIES



The methods used by the programs to achieve their stated objectives.



### IMPLEMENTATION METHODS



Activities for the practical implementation of the strategies.

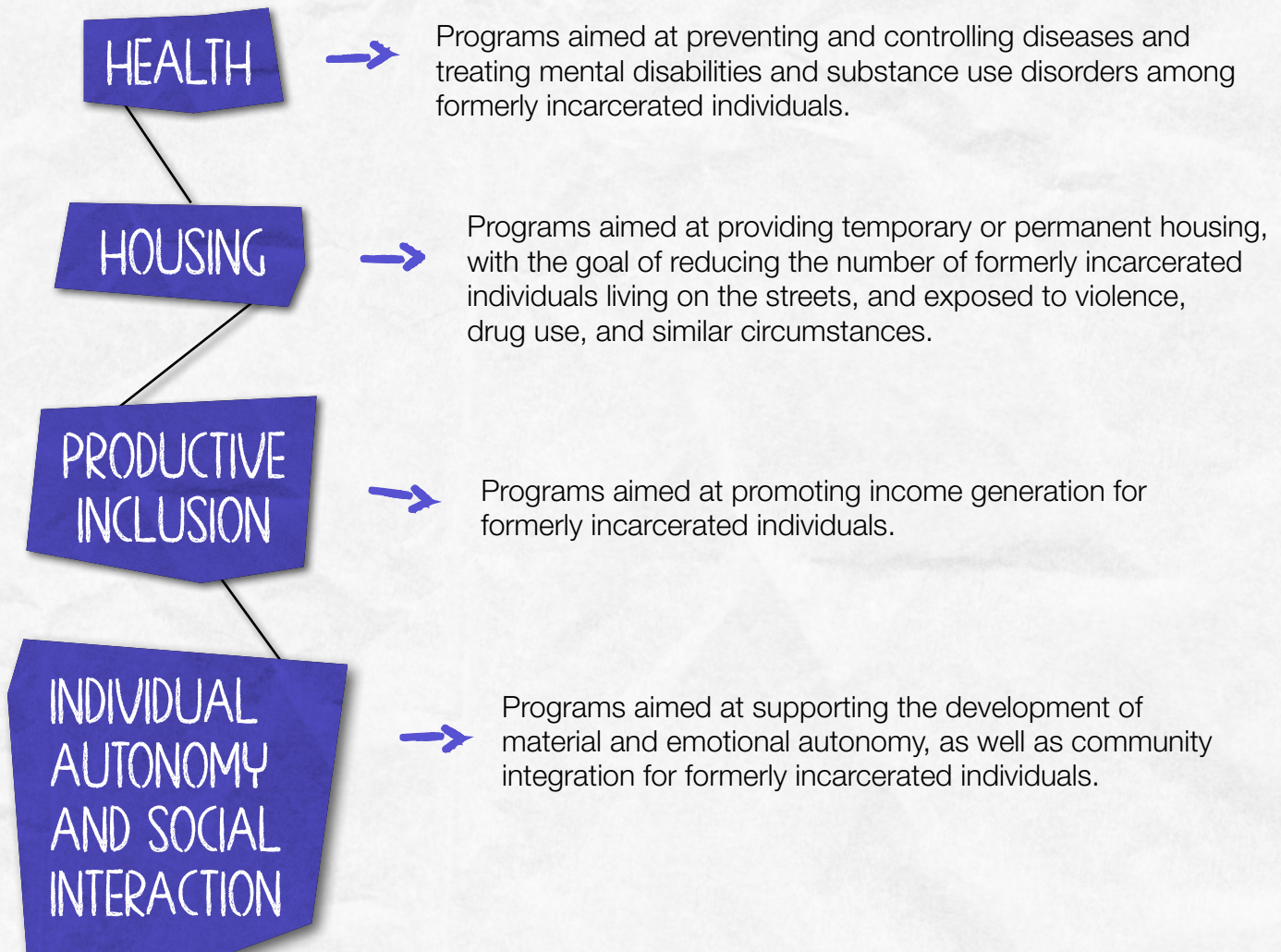


### EXAMPLES



Programs that illustrate these strategies are presented, showcasing the actual implementation of at least some of the activities discussed.

The objectives identified in the analyzed programs are as follows:



These programs have been implemented differently around the world, sometimes spanning multiple countries.<sup>9</sup> These initiatives simultaneously address various demands, including social and legal assistance, education, employability, housing, and health. In the specific case of Brazil, it is the responsibility of the State to ensure the necessary assistance for the social reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals, as provided by Article 10 of the Law of Criminal Enforcement.<sup>10</sup> Depending on the laws and cultural dynamics of the countries involved, the responsibility for

programs aimed at formerly incarcerated individuals may vary. Most of the programs analyzed in this study are implemented by the public sector and civil society, with initiatives also established by private actors, academia, social enterprises, religious associations, and public-private partnerships.<sup>11</sup>

The following chapters explain the various programs' approaches to achieving their purposes and the strategies they adopt. This information can serve as inspiration and a model for the conception and implementation of new social reintegration practices.

# 1. STRATEGIES FOR HEALTH PROGRAM



# 1. Strategies for Health Program

Promoting the health of incarcerated population and individuals released from prison re-entering society poses a challenge, considering the adverse conditions faced during confinement, such as overcrowding, lack of adequate ventilation, limited exposure to sunlight, increased risk of epidemics,<sup>12</sup> poor diet, and restricted access to healthcare services.<sup>13</sup> During the transition from incarceration to community life, marked by difficulties such as stigma, marginalization, and obstacles to obtaining medical assistance and social support, this challenge persists. Certain conditions require differentiated care strategies for individuals who have completed their sentences and are reintegrating into society, which should be considered when developing programs focused on the health of reentering individuals in Brazil.

Given this scenario, strategies must be implemented to address the physical and mental health needs of individuals who have completed their sentences and are in the process of reintegrating into society. This includes treatments for substance dependence and preventive measures for disease control. Three distinct strategies have been identified and can be combined: improving access to and quality of healthcare, promoting assistance and referral to social services for those with specific healthcare needs, and implementing educational and awareness-raising actions.

## 1.1 Access and Improvement of Healthcare Services

The programs employing the strategy of assessing and improving medical care take into account the health challenges faced by individuals post-release. They consider each person's specific needs and strive to enhance the availability and quality of services. These programs take various forms, either independently or in adaptable combinations, such as:

- Assistance in reintegrating into government health programs (in countries where access to healthcare benefits is suspended during incarceration).
- Data collection on incarcerated and released individuals to facilitate inclusion in government health programs post-release (in countries where access to healthcare benefits is suspended during incarceration).
- Virtual medical appointments for released individuals residing in remote areas.<sup>14</sup>
- 24-hour telephone services and specialized mobile teams for mental health support and crisis stabilization.
- Conducting consultations, referrals, and medication prescriptions immediately after release, especially for substance abuse treatment.
- Individualized support and mentoring by pairing with individuals with similar substance abuse histories.
- Development of intensive and personalized care plans.
- Primary healthcare support for released individuals by community health workers who are also formerly incarcerated.
- Healthcare coverage for low-income youth.<sup>15</sup>

### Example:



#### Culturally Competent Models of Care (USA)<sup>16</sup>

In the United States, initiatives such as “Culturally Competent Models of Care,” linked to Medicaid, aim to adapt healthcare services to meet the specific needs of formerly incarcerated individuals. According to the program, healthcare professionals encounter resistance from patients in accepting care, a reaction stemming from distrust generated by negative experiences before, during, and after the incarceration period.

To overcome this resistance, measures such as care coordination across different sectors, training healthcare professionals to deal with this population and including formerly incarcerated individuals as team members have been adopted with the goal of establishing a trusting relationship between patients and professionals. This model includes programs like the “Transition Clinic Network”, which has medical clinics located in areas with a high concentration of formerly incarcerated individuals, and the “Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative”, which employs formerly incarcerated individuals as community health workers to facilitate access to care and social services in the community.



## 1.2 Assistance and Referrals to Social Services for Formerly Incarcerated People with Specific Health Needs

To address specific health issues, such as substance dependence and/or chronic illnesses, which require multidisciplinary approaches involving medical treatment and the integration of social services, many individuals need support to continue their care and treatments. To facilitate access to a variety of resources, the program can take on unique or combined formats.

These can include the following types of services:

- Ongoing support from a social worker.
- Provision of housing services and referral to government housing programs.
- Referral to employment opportunities.
- Referral to support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.
- Legal assistance.
- Meetings with support teams for substance abuse.

### Example:



#### **Intensive Health Resettlement Community Support Service (United Kingdom)<sup>17</sup>**

The UK nonprofit organization Nacro supports individuals leaving the British prison system who are vulnerable or at risk of social exclusion. Since its establishment in 1966, it has provided services to help formerly incarcerated people rebuild their lives, achieve stability, and reintegrate productively into society. Concerned about high incarceration rates in England and Wales, Nacro operates through various programs to deliver specific and multisectoral services. For justice-impacted individuals with particular health needs, the organization offers the “Intensive Health Resettlement Service,” providing assistance and referrals to social services.

Specifically targeting formerly incarcerated individuals diagnosed with mental disabilities or using controlled medications, the program offers financial support, medical assistance, strengthens family and community ties, and helps secure safe and affordable housing. It also supports reducing substance use during the first six to twelve weeks after release, arranging appointments, ensuring access to necessary medications, and providing personalized assistance, including meetings with addiction treatment specialists and referrals to social assistance services or shelters.

## 1.3 Health Education and Awareness Initiatives

Health education and disease prevention are strategies to promote healthy behaviors and reduce the stigma associated with physical and mental disabilities. This approach aims to raise awareness about the importance of self-care, accessing healthcare services, and seeking support when needed. By correcting misconceptions and improving understanding about health, justice-impacted people can make conscious and positive decisions to improve their well-being and prevent diseases.

Thus, this strategy can be implemented through guidance initiatives focused on the following topics:

- Infectious diseases.
- Gynecological health.
- Sexual education.
- Substance abuse.

### Example:



#### **Retirando a invisibilidade e promovendo o cuidado (Brazil)<sup>18</sup>**

"Retirando a invisibilidade e promovendo o cuidado" (Uncovering Invisibility and Promoting Care) is an initiative developed during the pandemic context in 2020 by the NGO *Elas Existem* (Women Exist). Based in Rio de Janeiro, the project aimed to support girls in compliance with socio-educational measures, formerly incarcerated women and their families. The online support channel on WhatsApp, "Plantão *Elas Existem* no Covid-19," (Women Exist in Covid-19 Shift) provided information about the coronavirus (Covid-19) and legal and mental health guidance. Additionally, the program distributed food baskets with hygiene kits to justice-impacted women and their families.

# 2. STRATEGIES FOR HOUSING PROGRAM



## 2. Strategies for Housing Program

The lack of adequate housing emerges as a barrier to the process of social reintegration, exacerbating the challenges faced by individuals leaving incarceration and increasing the risk of recidivism. After serving their sentences, many individuals do not return to their homes due to the loss of connections or the fear of becoming an additional financial burden for their families, who often are already in a situation of socio-economic vulnerability.<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, in cases where the formerly incarcerated person is subject to a fine,<sup>20</sup> they cannot enter into rental or property acquisition contracts due to essential documents interdiction, such as the Individual Taxpayer Number (CPF). The lack of suitable housing is a factor that leads many justice-involved persons to homelessness, where they face risks such as involvement with drug use and engagement in illicit and/or precarious activities to survive.<sup>21</sup>

Housing programs operate on the premise that temporary or permanent housing is a key factor for successful reintegration into society and for reducing the vulnerability of formerly incarcerated people. Thus, stable and secure environments are promoted to enable beneficiaries to rebuild their lives away from criminal activities. Strategies include financial assistance for rent payment, offering and supporting the search for temporary or permanent housing, and establishing eligibility guidelines for housing access.

## 2.1 Housing Financial Assistance

Financial assistance for housing aims to alleviate housing insecurity and to prevent individuals from accumulating debts, losing connection with their original communities, or facing eviction.

Thus, the housing financial assistance can be implemented through:

- Rent payment:
  - Settling overdue rents accumulated during the incarceration period.
  - Assisting with rent payments until the formerly incarcerated individual is able to afford their own housing costs after release.

### Example:

#### Supporting Prisoners Advice Network (SPAN) (Scotland)<sup>22</sup>

The “Supporting Prisoners Advice Network” (SPAN) is an initiative that partners with three Scottish prisons, to provide housing assistance until beneficiaries secure safe accommodation and access educational opportunities, vocational training, or employment. The program covers overdue rent payments during incarceration and provides financial resources for rent payments post-release until justice-impacted people can sustain themselves. Additionally, it facilitates referrals for government benefits and assists those without a home in finding suitable housing.



## 2.2 Support in Finding Temporary or Permanent Housing

Providing direct access to temporary or permanent housing is one of the strategies to address housing insecurity for individuals reentering society. This involves offering or directing them to emergency and transitional accommodations and presenting options for stable, long-term housing.

This strategy can be implemented in the following ways:

- Emergency and transitional accommodation available from pre-release or upon release.
- Permanent housing options such as homeownership, private rental, or social housing.
- Referral to government housing programs.

### Example:



#### **Nacro Accommodation Support** (United Kingdom)<sup>23</sup>

The “Nacro Accommodation Support” initiative aims to assist individuals on probation in their reintegration into the community, with a focus on ensuring housing access and stability. With the goal of promoting independence and resilience, it seeks to empower formerly incarcerated people to live autonomously and thereby reduce criminal recidivism. The program offers a wide range of services, from guidance on accessing government programs to counseling on finding available rental accommodations in the private sector. Additionally, it provides ongoing support, including assistance in maintaining the beneficiaries’ current accommodations.

## 2.3 Eligibility Guidelines for Housing Access

In addition to directly housing provision services for justice-impacted individuals, there are strategies aimed at ensuring their inclusion and retention in existing social housing programs available to the general population. These measures aim to reduce the rejection of housing applications and the stigmatization of formerly incarcerated people by landlords and authorities responsible for the admission process.

This can be achieved through:

- Establishment of guidelines on inclusion and retention criteria for justice-impacted individuals in social housing programs.

### Example:



#### Notice PIH 2015-19 (USA)<sup>24</sup>

As a measure to ensure that access to housing is not denied based on criminal backgrounds, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has established criteria for admission and eviction policies. The Notice PIH 2015-19 emphasizes that civil rights should be considered when accessing federally subsidized housing. Also, concrete evidence and individual circumstances should be taken into account before using criminal records as the sole criterion for denying admission, terminating contracts, or evicting tenants. HUD emphasizes the importance of evaluating factors such as the severity and date of convictions and mitigating circumstances when making decisions. It also highlights the need to justify eviction actions in court based on evidence of criminal activity.

# 3. STRATEGIES FOR PRODUCTIVE INCLUSION PROGRAM





### 3. Strategies for Productive Inclusion Program

The provision of work and professional training for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people still faces numerous challenges in Brazil. According to the National Penitentiary Information Survey (Infopen),<sup>25</sup> only 23.9% of those serving sentences were involved in work activities. This situation also impacts the post-prison environment, as employment is crucial for returning citizens to attain stability upon reintegrating into society.

Beyond serving as a means of livelihood, work represents an opportunity for a fresh start and a life removed from criminal activities. It fosters the development of new connections and a different routine, guided by alternative codes, values, and social norms. However, due to the stigma surrounding the prison experience and the often low educational attainment of many entering and leaving incarceration, it is common for justice-impacted individuals to encounter precarious jobs with low pay, reinforcing past workforce experiences and exacerbating vulnerabilities.<sup>26</sup>

To address these challenges, productive inclusion programs are implementing strategies to promote income generation and financial independence among beneficiaries. Each initiative adopts a specific format and combines various strategies, including preparation for professional integration, creation of entrepreneurship or employment opportunities, and support for job retention, vocational training, and entrepreneurial endeavors.

### 3.1 Job Readiness Preparation

Through virtual and in-person courses or mentorships, professional readiness aims to enhance the skills of young people who have undergone socio-educational measures or formerly incarcerated individuals. The goal is to assist these groups in all aspects of job hunting, including resume writing, job searching, career counseling, application completion, and interview training.

Investing in programs that adopt this professional readiness strategy demonstrates a commitment to building a solid pathway for social reintegration. Acquiring technical skills can broaden employability prospects and provide a foundation for individual growth, contributing to the rebuilding of self-confidence and self-esteem.

This strategy can be applied in various ways, either independently or in combination with others, including:

- Professional training through:
  - Mentorship.
  - Courses.
  - Online platforms for vocational training.
  - Funding scholarships for vocational courses.
- Job search support, including:
  - Resume writing.
  - Looking for job openings.
  - Career counseling.
  - Orienting application completion.
  - Interview preparation.

#### Example:



#### **The Skill Mill** (United Kingdom and Estonia)<sup>27</sup>

The Skill Mill program, present in the UK and Estonia, is a civil society initiative aiming to increase both employment opportunities and educational attainment for young people aged 16 to 18 who have been involved in the justice system.<sup>28</sup> Skill Mill focuses on providing employment opportunities in water management, thereby reducing flood risks while delivering social and environmental benefits to communities. Participants receive accredited training, recognized qualifications, and work alongside contractors and private partners. Each group is hired with remuneration for six months, gaining practical work experience.

According to data from the program's official website, the program employed 393 young people in the UK over nine years. Of these, only 29 were reconvicted, representing a reoffending rate of just 7.3%. This rate is significantly lower compared to the expected counterfactual<sup>29</sup> reoffending rate of 72%. Following the program, 75% of participants secured new job opportunities, education, or professional qualifications.

## 3.2 Creating Opportunities for Employment and Entrepreneurship

Creating entrepreneurship or employment opportunities is essential to directly integrate formerly incarcerated people into the workforce or facilitate autonomous income generation. This approach is crucial as it provides tangible resources that enable these individuals' productive and independent reintegration into society.

It can be adopted in the following ways:

- Funding individual entrepreneurship initiatives.
- Securing job openings with private and public sector partners.
- Developing an online job platform designed to connect justice-impacted persons with employers.
- Marketing products developed by formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Referring justice-involved individuals to specialized job agencies or placements.

### Example:

#### Yellow Ribbon Project Singapore (Singapore)<sup>30</sup>

The Yellow Ribbon Project, launched in Singapore in 2004, is based on collaboration among public, private, and civil society actors. The project aims to economically reintegrate formerly incarcerated people while strengthening their resilience and autonomy, facilitating their integration into society.

During incarceration, participants work in roles aligned with the country's productive demands, such as website development and industrial and food production for external sales. These activities allow for the development of both generic and specific competencies for the job market, including soft and hard skills applicable to various jobs and digital literacy.

Upon release from prison, formerly incarcerated people continue to receive support for 6 to 12 months, including vocational training and referrals to job opportunities aligned with their interests. This comprehensive support provides means of livelihood while also helping the beneficiaries gain greater self-awareness of their skills and challenges, assisting them in understanding the types of jobs that best suit them based on their strengths and career development.

### 3.3 Support for Job Retention, Vocational Training, and Entrepreneurship Initiatives

Programs aimed at ensuring productive inclusion must consider the challenge of keeping justice-involved people engaged, thus avoiding dropout. This can be achieved through both immediate and long-term support, including complementary assistance to improve the work and study environments for these individuals.

Therefore, the adopted strategies may include:

- Transportation vouchers and financial support for purchasing tickets.
- Meals provision during the program through vouchers, food basket distribution, and restaurant access.
- Funds to enable quick access to resources in emergencies faced by formerly incarcerated people.
- Psychological support.
- Legal support.
- Referral to social housing programs.
- Financial incentives for achieving goals.

#### Example:



#### **Fresh Start (USA)**<sup>31</sup>

Since 2021, the Fresh Start program, implemented by the Strive NGO and supported by the social investment fund Gotham Gives, aims to ensure that formerly incarcerated people are employed or attending college at the end of three years, thereby contributing to reducing unemployment and recidivism rates. In addition to providing vocational and educational training, the program recognizes the importance of offering additional support to maintain these achievements. Among the resources provided are psychological and socio-economic support, referral to housing services, transportation/meal assistance, emergency funds, incentives for goal achievement, scholarships, and ongoing access to services after program completion.

### 3.4 Employer Awareness and Measures

To achieve the goal of integrating formerly incarcerated people into the labor market, it is essential to develop a strategy to raise awareness and sensitize employers and organizations about the shared responsibility that society has in the challenge of social reintegration. This approach not only benefits justice-involved individuals but can also positively influence overall human resource management practices. By promoting more inclusive work environments, companies adopt an organizational culture that values social responsibility and diversity.

Thus, the awareness strategy can be implemented independently or in combination, through:

- Quotas for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people in companies hired by the government.
- Granting economic subsidies by the government to companies that formally hire formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Certification and incentives for companies employing justice-involved people, such as social responsibility stamps and awards.
- Raising awareness among companies about the importance and necessity of hiring formerly incarcerated people.
- Improving the hiring process for formerly incarcerated people, including:
  - Eliminating the requirement for disclosure of criminal convictions in the selection process.

#### Examples:



##### **Ban the Box** (United Kingdom)<sup>32</sup>

Launched in 2013 in the United Kingdom by civil society organizations like Unlock, the Ban the Box initiative follows the example of a concept that originated from the United States. The campaign aims to advocate for the rights of individuals with criminal records, promoting “fair chance hiring” practices. The goal is to eliminate the requirement to disclose criminal convictions in the early stages of job applications, seeking to ensure equal opportunities. This allows justice-impacted people applications to be assessed based on their skills, without reducing them to their prison experience, which is often seen as a barrier to productive inclusion.

##### **Selo Nacional de Responsabilidade Social – Resgata** (Brazil)<sup>33</sup>

Since 2017, the Selo Nacional de Responsabilidade Social - Resgata (National Social Responsibility Stamp - Resgata) seeks to highlight, encourage, and recognize organizations that employ individuals in deprivation of liberty, in psychiatric facilities, serving alternative sentences, and released from the prison system. Through the granting of a seal and fiscal benefits, the program values organizations that meet the following criteria: hiring a specific percentage of workers who fall into the described categories, developing social initiatives, with no judicial history related to slave labor, with transparent selection practices, and proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

# 4. STRATEGIES FOR INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION PROGRAMS



## 4. Strategies for Individual Autonomy and Social Integration Programs

Marginalization and discrimination against incarcerated and released individuals have a significant impact on their criminal trajectories, making social reintegration challenging.<sup>34</sup> Often, a series of stigmas are attributed based on the fact that someone is a formerly incarcerated person, hindering the recognition of their qualities.<sup>35</sup> This reality, combined with insufficient investments and a scarcity of social reintegration services, constitutes a substantial barrier for justice-involved people to meet their needs and integrate into society.

Taking this into consideration, the strategies in this category understand that the process of returning to society should involve not only meeting material and emotional needs but also combating stigmatization. These strategies are committed to promoting the necessary conditions for stable social integration, addressing individual internal conditions, relationships with others, and influencing the social environment. To achieve this, they adopt different formats and combine multiple approaches, as detailed below.

## 4.1 Development of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationships

The emotional challenges arising from the period of confinement, such as the reduction of social connections and the transformations that occur during that time, can cause trauma, anxiety, and self-esteem issues in formerly incarcerated people.<sup>36</sup> There are initiatives that seek to work on the relationship of justice-involved individuals with themselves and with others around them, including family members, friends, coworkers, and members of their communities. These initiatives offer opportunities for personal development and enhancement of practical and socio-emotional skills through psychological support, courses, mentorships, legal workshops, life planning mechanisms, and support groups. Strategies can be implemented individually or combined, in the following formats:

- Psychological support for:
  - Mediation and improvement of family relationships.
  - Development of emotional skills.
  - Socio-emotional strengthening for disengagement from violent extremist groups.
- Courses on:
  - Parenting skills.
  - Relationship skills.
  - Anger management.
  - Non-violent communication.
- Direct assistance from social workers to reframe the formerly incarcerated individual's trajectory.
- Mentoring and life planning to deal with concrete challenges after release.
- Group meetings to discuss prison experience and explore ways to move forward.
- Enhancement of self-esteem through strengthening of identity elements, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and access to rights, through activities such as:
  - Conversation Circles.
  - Cultural events (poetry, music, writing, and literature).
  - Cultural and artistic workshops, including theater, dance, and music classes.
  - Participation in spiritual and meditation activities.<sup>37</sup>
  - Citizenship and political education workshops.
  - Legal guidance and workshops to gain basic knowledge on social rights, family law, criminal law, and criminal procedure.
  - Transitional housing in geographically distant areas from where the individual's offense was committed, facilitating new social bonds.



**Example:****RH do Egresso (Brazil)<sup>38</sup>**

The Brazilian initiative “Reflexões da Liberdade” (Reflections on Freedom), conceived by Emerson Ferreira, a former incarcerated person, aims to promote collective reflection on the factors leading to incarceration. Since its foundation in 2017, the organization has been dedicated to generating mobilization and social transformation, with the goal of breaking the cycle of crime and removing barriers to the reintegration of formerly incarcerated people into society.

One of the highlights of the organization is the “RH do Egresso” (Justice-impacted People HR) program, which provides direct support to beneficiaries. The program encompasses a wide range of activities focused on personal and professional development, addressing essential issues such as citizenship, strengthening paths of personal transformation, building support networks, and achieving individual goals, dreams, and self-assessment.

**Example:****Community Mediation Maryland’s Prisoner Re-entry Program (USA)<sup>39</sup>**

The “Community Mediation Maryland’s Prisoner Re-entry” program, implemented in the United States, offers support for the challenges faced by formerly incarcerated people when reintegrating into their families and society. The program provides participants with the opportunity to engage in conversations with their families about the past, re-establish relationships, and make plans for the future, all with the assistance of a specialized mediator.

Mediators assist participants through an idea-generating process, exploring a variety of options. The participants themselves propose all reflections and solutions for a successful transition. As consensus is reached, mediators pose questions that help in crafting a plan together with the family.

## 4.2 Addressing Basic Survival Needs

It's crucial to acknowledge that various fundamental needs must be addressed for a formerly incarcerated individual to attain broader goals. For instance, before embarking on a job search, it's essential for them to have resources like appropriate clothing, a phone, and means to cover transportation costs.<sup>40</sup>

Another relevant example is the case of fines. Formerly incarcerated people subject to this penalty and who fail to regularize their documents face difficulties accessing social programs, signing rental contracts, opening bank accounts, and entering the formal labor market. In essence, these programs acknowledge the importance of addressing not only long-term demands but also the immediate needs of justice-impacted people, which can be tackled in various ways, either individually or combined:

- Starter kit for the first days of freedom, including essential items such as:
  - Personal hygiene products.
  - Cell phone for communication with family and support services.
  - Provision of snacks and distribution of food baskets to ensure access to meals.
  - Donation of weather-appropriate clothing suitable for professional environments.
- Assistance in obtaining personal documents.
- Transportation vouchers and financial support for purchasing tickets.
- Legal assistance to partially or fully regain citizenship rights, including clearing criminal records and discussing fine payments.
- Monthly income transfer for purchasing basic food and hygiene items.
- Creation of a savings account that allows formerly incarcerated individuals and their families to access accumulated funds from work done during incarceration.
- Referral to government aid for housing, legal assistance, employment, health, and education through:
  - Individual guidance.
  - Support Hotline.
  - Apps and websites providing information on services.
- Provision of accommodation in transitional or permanent housing.
- Integration into basic healthcare services, mental health care, and substance abuse treatment.

**Example:****Nacro Doncaster Prison Departure Lounge (United Kingdom)<sup>41</sup>**

The “Departure Lounge” is a service offered by Nacro aimed at providing immediate support to at least 90% of individuals released from Doncaster prison, offering them advice, guidance, and support on the day of their release. With the assistance of social workers, volunteers, and specialized health teams on-site, the project serves as a reception center for formerly incarcerated people, being the first stop after prison. It assists in finding accommodation, employment, education, vocational training, and integration into mental health services and substance abuse treatment. Additionally, the program provides financial planning for the beneficiaries’ next steps and supplies such as packed meals, food vouchers, cell phones, clothing for different occasions, hygiene products, and transportation vouchers.

**Example:****Mutirão Carcerário (Brazil)<sup>42</sup>**

In the Brazilian context, in addition to imprisonment, the fine penalty applied to certain crimes poses severe obstacles to the full citizenship of individuals convicted by the Criminal Justice system, hindering access to higher education, the formal job market, and social benefits, as well as suspending the right to vote. These restrictions occur due to the suspension of the Individual Taxpayer Number (CPF), which persists until the fine is paid.

The “Mutirão Carcerário (Prison System Task Force) is a Brazilian legal assistance program conducted by the Instituto de Defesa do Direito de Defesa (Defense of the Right to Defense Institute), which works to challenge, through appeals and petitions before the judiciary, the disproportionate requirement of fine payments. The program is based on the idea that expanding the rights of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, especially equitable access to work and income, is essential to overcoming the social and economic vulnerability experienced by these individuals during and after their time in prison.

### 4.3 Learning Opportunities

The transformations experienced during the period of incarceration can generate stress and self-esteem issues in justice-impacted people. To address these emotional aspects, it becomes essential to provide opportunities for education and learning about new technologies and technical skills, enabling formerly incarcerated people to access the tools to navigate society.

This can be implemented in various ways, either independently or combined:

- Formal and non-formal educational opportunities:
  - Financial literacy education.
  - Computer workshops.
  - Literacy programs.
  - Adult and Youth Education.
- Vocational training.
- Individual pedagogical support.
- Partnerships with educational institutions offering vocational courses.

#### Example:



#### **Social Care House (Yemen)**<sup>43</sup>

The “Social Care House” is an initiative of the Ministry of Human Rights in Yemen with financial support from the Government of Germany that aims to facilitate the reintegration of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, as well as victims of violence. The goal is to help these women achieve independence and reintegrate into society.

In partnership with the Arab Foundation for Supporting Women and Juveniles and Al-Mansura Prison, the program offers educational opportunities, vocational training, literacy classes, and legal assistance. With a multidisciplinary team formed by social workers, doctors, psychologists, lawyers, and volunteers, the Social Care House provides the necessary support for these women to rebuild their lives. It recognizes that many beneficiaries cannot return to their families after prison due to moral stigma and the risk of violence and abuse.

## 4.4 Training of Professionals Working with Formerly incarcerated Individuals

The professionals responsible for welcoming formerly incarcerated people play a central role in social reintegration. They provide support and specific guidance for each case, acting as facilitators for justice-impacted people to access public policies and develop a trusting relationship with the institutional support system. For these professionals to operate more effectively, they must be trained to handle situations in a humane and multidisciplinary manner. This includes knowledge of relevant legislation, interview and counseling techniques, conflict management, and mastery of available social support networks. Considering that this is a nationwide issue requiring the adoption of standards of quality, awareness, and empathy all over the country, training can be implemented through:

- Development of specific methodologies for:
  - Social assistance.
  - Psychological support.
  - Integration into the job market.
  - Preparation for pre-release.
  - Individualized care tailored to each person's unique needs.

**Example:****Projeto Singular Integrado do Escritório Social (Brazil)<sup>44</sup>**

The “Projeto Singular Integrado do Escritório Social” (The Integrated Singular Project of Social Office) is one of many service methodologies developed for a better understanding of the individual needs of formerly incarcerated people seeking support in the services of the Escritório Social (Social Office). Established in 2016 by the Brazilian National Council of Justice (CNJ), these social offices function as spaces of shared management between the Judiciary and the Executive, serving as support points for justice-impacted individuals and their families. Adopting a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach, with teams formed by psychologists, social workers, and lawyers, the Social Offices are distributed throughout the country, sharing the goal of aligning the quality of care and ensuring the satisfaction of users’ needs through the integration of public policies and the strengthening of the social support network and formerly incarcerated people’s rights.

The methodology prioritizes attentive and respectful listening to create a welcoming environment, allowing beneficiaries to share their life experiences. The process takes into account the particularities of each individual and their trajectories. It follows four distinct steps: (1) Understanding the individual’s life history and their social connections, both past and present, considering the impact of the prison system; (2) Analysis of the individual’s personal social network and their spheres of sociability, delving into how their social life was structured before and after their incarceration, as well as how their prison experience has impacted these dynamics; (3) Identification of mediating contacts, i.e., the people or groups that can offer support to improve the individual’s living conditions; and (4) Mapping the demand for access to public services, considering the individual’s inclusion or exclusion in the social policy network and structural inequalities in the distribution of these services.

Throughout this process, the methodology proposes specific activities and guidance to establish a constructive bond with the justice-impacted person, addressing the sensitive points faced and ensuring the professionalism of the service.

## 4.5 Strengthening the Social Environment and Reducing Stigmatization in Communities

Strengthening the social environment and reducing stigmatization in community spaces is a strategy aimed at building a more harmonious collective coexistence and promoting the effective reintegration of formerly incarcerated people. With this objective in mind, the aim is to impact the community by raising awareness about the challenges faced by formerly incarcerated people and offering alternatives to the traditional judicial system, such as restorative justice. This approach promotes mediation between aggressor and victim for damage repair, resulting in less trauma and social ruptures than those typically caused by traditional criminal justice.

The strategy seeks to change perceptions about justice-involved people by fostering empathy, solidarity, and support within society. It can be implemented in various configurations, either individually or combined, including, but not limited to:

- Visits to prison unities open to the general public, including university communities, civil society organizations, government, and businesses.
- Dynamics and discussions in schools, prisons, and businesses to develop emotional skills and promote a culture of peace.
- Communication materials production to reduce stigmatization against formerly incarcerated people and raise awareness in society about the importance of solidarity in the reintegration process, including screenings of audiovisual productions about their personal experiences related to prison.
- Alternatives to the punitive justice model, focusing on reconciliation between the parties involved, such as restorative justice practices.
- Community awareness of the challenges faced after release, through interaction with formerly incarcerated individuals in:
  - Work or vocational training environments.
  - Commercial spaces employing formerly incarcerated individuals.
  - Cultural and artistic activities, primarily focused on young people.
  - Volunteer programs focused on formerly incarcerated people, as well as their inclusion in volunteer projects covering various topics besides the prison experience.

**Example:****Restaurant Employment for Formers** (Indonesia)<sup>45</sup>

“Restaurant Employment for Formers” is a social enterprise in Indonesia that provides employment opportunities in local restaurants and bakeries in the cities of Semarang and Solo, in Java. The program aims to promote the integration of formerly incarcerated people with the community, encourage the development of a sense of purpose, reduce stigma, and stimulate income generation.

Conceived by Huda Ismai, a former incarcerated person previously classified as a violent extremist,<sup>46</sup> the program seeks to support beneficiaries with similar profiles, establishing a relationship of trust among participants and legitimizing the reintegration process. By serving a diverse clientele, while people come to see formerly incarcerated people differently, the program helps beneficiaries develop essential skills and strengthen community bonds for successful reintegration into society through employment, an important tool in this process.

**Example:****The Way Home** (Indonesia)<sup>47</sup>

The “The Way Home” program, implemented by civil society in Sulawesi, Indonesia, used audiovisual production to raise awareness and educate the community through the screening of the film “The Way Home.” This fictional yet representative film narrates the journey of a former violent extremist offender who returns to his hometown after release. The Rumah Katu Community organized screenings of the film in over 10 locations in the region, reaching a diverse audience, including local government officials, university students, community leaders, and business leaders.

A 2018 publication about the program<sup>48</sup> revealed that the audience developed a new understanding of the challenges faced by formerly incarcerated people as they attempt to rebuild their lives after prison. The strategy of using cinema as an engagement tool proved to be an effective means of conveying messages about rehabilitation and reintegration, stimulating reflections on the importance of reintegrating these individuals into society.



# Integrated Programs: Transition Services

Considering the complexity of the demands that formerly incarcerated people face upon reintegrating into society, there are programs referred to here as transition services – which offer support of various kinds and facilitate access to multiple services and rights in a single space. The proposal is that, in the same location, the justice-impacted person can have access to services and programs in areas relevant to their process of social reintegration, such as legal and social assistance, housing, health, education, work, and other forms of support, treating all areas with equal importance.

Transition services act as a reference point for these individuals, providing information and assistance in various areas. The idea is to minimize the confusion and anxiety associated with navigating bureaucratic and fragmented systems and increase the likelihood that returning citizens receive the necessary support for successful reintegration. The offer of quick and coordinated assistance reduces the need to travel to different locations, which is crucial for formerly incarcerated people, as they often face financial, transportation, time, or knowledge difficulties regarding public facilities and institutions. Below, we present various models that can serve this purpose.

## Different Forms of Support Integrated into Housing

In the integrated housing model, the formerly incarcerated individual has the opportunity to reside in an environment that offers different complementary supports, such as transitional housing and permanent residences. While transitional housing provides accommodation for a limited period, which can vary from months to years, other programs provide

home ownership, private renting, or social renting. In both modalities, initiatives such as psychological support, educational and professional opportunities, legal assistance, and treatment for substance abuse, among others, are provided alongside housing:

- Transitional housing may provide the following services:
  - Psychological counseling.
  - Life planning/case management.
  - Treatment and rehabilitation for substance abusers.
  - Educational opportunities.
  - Financial autonomy education.
  - Vocational training.
  - Support for accessing the job market.
  - Legal assistance.
  - Participation in internal and community activities (cleaning, cooking, and house maintenance).
  - Participation in spiritual activities and meditation.
- Permanent housing, in the forms of homeownership, private renting, or social renting, may provide the following supports:
  - Job search support.
  - Psychological counseling.
  - Life planning.
  - Treatment and rehabilitation for substance abusers.

**Example:****Casa de Acolhida – Centro Social Nossa Senhora Aparecida (Brazil)<sup>49</sup>**

From an old boarding house for middle and upper-class women in the 1950s, the space transformed into Casa de Acolhida – Centro Social Nossa Senhora Aparecida (Shelter House - Social Center Nossa Senhora de Aparecida), an institution intended for children, elderly, and women in situations of abandonment and vulnerability, under the management of the Palotina Association. However, in 2006, faced with the new social composition of downtown São Paulo, which began to host various nationalities of immigrants and refugees, the house adjusted its focus to accommodate immigrant and refugee women, including those released from the prison system and their children. In 2014, the first agreement was signed between the Centro Social Nossa Senhora Aparecida and the municipal government through the Secretariat of Human Rights-Coordination of Public Policies for Immigrants, which allowed for the transfer of funds to aid in the structural maintenance of the space.

Understanding that shelter is a human right and a fundamental necessity for immigrant women, the program promotes, from a holistic perspective and considering the specificities of women released from the prison system, the realization of formative projects and workshops, as well as referral services for job opportunities and the active participation of everyone in the maintenance and care of collective and private spaces.

## Community and service centers for formerly incarcerated people and their families needs

Community and service centers aim to centralize access to services, increasing efficiency in assistance, but they do not function as housing for formerly incarcerated people. These services provide a safe and welcoming environment where beneficiaries can gather and participate in various activities, including artistic and citizenship workshops, sports practices, vocational courses, and referrals to other social programs.

- Community centers may provide:
  - Citizenship and political education workshops.
  - Cultural and artistic workshops.
  - Computer literacy workshops.
  - Sports activities.
  - Vocational training courses.
  - Psychosocial support services.
  - Adult and Youth Education.
  - Individual pedagogical support.
  - Restorative justice practices and conflict mediation.
  - Referrals to other social services.

- Service centers may address the following demands:
  - Assistance in obtaining personal documents.
  - Support for primary health, mental health, and treatment for substance abusers.
  - Access to transportation through vouchers and funds for purchasing tickets.
  - Legal assistance, including legal guidance and procedural support.
  - Referrals to social benefits:
    - Guidance to government and private income transfer programs.
    - Partnerships with state or municipal secretariats offering temporary shelters.
    - Partnerships with educational institutions offering vocational courses.
  - Formal and non-formal education opportunities.
  - Support groups for stigmatized formerly incarcerated people and their families.
  - Support groups to address the specific needs of women, LGBTQIAP+, ethnic and racial minoritized communities (including Indigenous and black individuals), foreigners, individuals with physical or mental disabilities, and those suffering with substance abuse and addiction.
- Release starter package, including essential items such as:
  - Personal hygiene products.
  - Cell phones for communication with family and support services.
  - Provision of snacks and distribution of food baskets to ensure access to meals.
  - Donation of weather-appropriate clothing suitable for professional environments.
- Contact with formerly incarcerated people and sensibilization measures for the general population:
  - Communication strategies and dissemination of information on digital and institutional networks.
    - Communication actions on stigma against formerly incarcerated people in different media platforms.
  - Promotion of contact between stigmatized justice-impacted individuals and the general population.
    - Cultural and artistic activities for social integration and inclusion, primarily focused on young people.
    - Volunteer work focused on justice-impacted people, as well as their inclusion in volunteer projects covering various topics besides the prison experience.

**Example:****Casa das Juventudes (Brazil)<sup>50</sup>**

In the State of Rio Grande do Sul, the city of Canoas, historically challenged by violence, experienced a decrease in crime rates after the implementation of the National Public Security with Citizenship Program (Programa Nacional de Segurança Pública com Cidadania - Pronasci), especially with the creation of the Guajuviras Peace Territory (Território de Paz Guajuviras).<sup>51</sup> Due to its initial success, the project expanded to the neighborhoods of Mathias Velho and Harmonia in 2011, establishing the second Peace Territory and boosting the creation of two Casas da Juventude (Youth Centers).

The Youth Centers were designed as places of reception and social interaction for young people aged 15 to 24 who are at risk, socially vulnerable, or exposed to violence, including formerly incarcerated people, young people serving socio-educational measures, those living on the streets, or residents of urban areas with high rates of homicides and violent crimes. Aimed at providing a fresh start for these youths, these facilities offer a range of activities including citizenship workshops, artistic and cultural workshops, vocational courses, psychosocial support, internet access through telecenters, and areas for sports activities. A multidisciplinary team, composed of social educators, interns, sociologists, social workers, and psychologists, is essential for conducting these activities, providing technical support and individualized follow-up for the development of life projects. This support also includes addressing learning difficulties, family support, and mediation to access other social programs.

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# Endnotes

1. This study adopts the perspective of Alvin August de Sá (2001), who argues that social reintegration should not be determined by the crime committed or the sentence imposed, but by the relationship between the incarcerated individual and their social context. For more on this topic, refer to the article: "Conception of Crime as an Expression of a History of Conflicts: Implications for the Social Reintegration of Convicts Serving Prison Sentences." *Escola Superior da Magistratura do Estado de Santa Catarina (ESMESC) Magazine*, v. 7, n. 11, pp. 169-178, 2001.
2. We understand that the concept of social (re)integration and its related terms are contested, considering that individuals targeted by the criminal justice system have historically faced inequalities and social exclusion.
3. National Council of Justice (CNJ), 2022. [Caderno de gestão dos escritórios sociais IV: metodologia de enfrentamento ao estigma e plano de trabalho para sua implantação](#)
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5. Igarapé Institute (2022). [Reincidência e reentrada na prisão no Brasil: o que estudos dizem sobre os fatores que contribuem para essa trajetória](#)
6. O Justa (2022). [O funil de investimento da segurança pública e prisional no Brasil](#)
7. The Igarapé Institute analyzed 511 documents on post-prison release services, selecting initiatives from publications in English, Portuguese, and Spanish. These documents come from various sources, including the Criminal Justice Periodical Index, The Campbell Collaboration Library, Scielo, The Cochrane Collaboration, RedAlyc, LAPTOC, ProQuest, Web of Science, JSTOR, Medline, and the Brazilian Scientific Information Ecosystem (BrCris). Only publications from the last decade (2013-2023) were considered, and although the focus was on examining programs implemented nationally and internationally, a targeted search was conducted on Brazilian state government websites to ensure comprehensive representation of local initiatives. An analysis protocol was applied to compile program characteristics, addressing formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Aspects considered included implementation locations and scale, objectives, stakeholders, development methodology, activities, human and financial resources, beneficiary populations, expected and achieved outcomes, evidence used, and evaluation instruments.
8. Social entrepreneurship aims to create and maximize social value and impact through innovative activities, distinguishing itself from traditional entrepreneurship, which primarily focuses on profit generation. For further information on the subject, refer to: Parente, Cristina et al (2011). [Empreendedorismo social: contributos teóricos para a sua definição](#)
9. In this study, Brazil was the only country in Latin America represented in initiatives for formerly incarcerated people, possibly due to the adopted methodological approach. Although not used for selecting the publications analyzed in this study, the Evidence in Safety and Justice platform, [Evidencias en Seguridad y Justicia](#), developed by the Inter-American Development Bank, compiles scientifically proven solutions specifically targeted at the prison systems of Latin America and the Caribbean.
10. Law of Criminal Enforcement (1984). [Lei nº 7.210](#), July 11, 1984.
11. Public-private partnerships in Brazil refer to collaborative agreements between government entities and private sector companies aimed at leveraging the strengths and resources of both sectors to achieve goals that might be difficult for either sector to accomplish alone.
12. According to data from the [Levantamento Nacional de Informações Penitenciárias](#), approximately 30,000 cases of AIDS, tuberculosis, syphilis, and hepatitis were reported in state prisons for both male and female individuals in the first semester of 2023.
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14. Released individuals often face numerous obstacles when trying to access healthcare services, including resource scarcity in rural areas, lack of transportation, inadequate childcare, and rigid work schedules that hinder attendance at in-person medical appointments. This imbalance between the need for care and the capacity to receive it is prevalent in rural areas. Telehealth services have emerged as a promising solution to expand access to care in these regions, especially since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the use of this technology experienced significant growth worldwide.
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27. The Skill Mill. [About us](#)
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29. Counterfactual refers to a hypothetical scenario that would have occurred if a certain intervention had not been carried out. More on the subject can be found in [Avaliações de impactos: pensamento contrafactual e inferência causal, controles experimentais e estudos observacionais](#), de Francisco Araújo e Ricardo Kubrusly (2013). Repositório FGV.
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37. Activities of a spiritual nature and the practice of meditation have proven to be relevant in initiatives aimed at indigenous populations, adapted to respect their particular cultures.
38. Reflexões da Liberdade. [O que fazemos](#)
39. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2012. [Introductory Handbook on the Prevention of Recidivism and the Social Reintegration of Offenders](#)
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45. Global Center on Cooperative Security (2018). [It Takes a Village: An Action Agenda on the Role of Civil Society in the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Those Associated with and Affected by Violent Extremism](#)
46. "Violent Extremist Offender" (VEO) is the term used to describe an individual who, through their actions, demonstrates a violent commitment to a political, religious, or social ideology. These individuals may be involved in various activities, including planning, promoting, inciting, preparing, or carrying out violent acts as part of an extremist movement. The specific definitions and characteristics of a VEO may vary depending on the jurisdiction and legal contexts in which they are considered.
47. Global Center on Cooperative Security (2018). [It Takes a Village: An Action Agenda on the Role of Civil Society in the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Those Associated with and Affected by Violent Extremism](#)
48. Ibidem.
49. De Souza, Claudia Moraes (2017). "O Social em Questão," v. 20, nº 38. [Casa das mulheres: refugiadas, estrangeiras egressas do sistema penitenciário e políticas de acolhida em São Paulo / Brasil](#)
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51. The Peace Territory project (Território de Paz), launched in the second half of 2009, aimed to improve living conditions and security in the Guajuviras neighborhood of Canoas city. This initiative, a result of collaboration between the federal, state, and municipal governments, was structured in three coordinated areas of action: social inclusion and cohesion, intelligence and technology, and community policing and integration. In Guajuviras, the project contributed to a significant reduction in violence, evidenced by a 39.2% decrease in homicides in the neighborhood in 2009 and 2010, and an 18% reduction in homicides throughout the municipality.

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