

# Reimagining San Quentin

Recommendations to Transform  
San Quentin State Prison into a  
Rehabilitation Center

JANUARY 2024



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This report was prepared for  
California Governor Gavin Newsom to provide  
recommendations to transform San Quentin State  
Prison — the oldest and most notorious prison in  
California — from a maximum-security prison into  
*a rehabilitation center focused on improving  
public safety.*

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# Introduction

**San Quentin is a unique prison.** Its vibrant and engaged incarcerated population, an extraordinary breadth of programs that are offered by deeply committed community-based organizations and the residents of San Quentin themselves, alongside a number of trusted, rehabilitation-minded healthcare and custody staff, have led many to regard San Quentin as one of the best facilities in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

In March 2023, Governor Newsom announced a plan to further transform San Quentin into a model rehabilitation center. In May 2023, he assembled an Advisory Council of Californians, from different professional and experiential backgrounds, to collect and offer recommendations about this transformation. *See [Appendix A](#) for information about the Advisory Council and its process.*

This is part of a larger effort. Over the past decade, California has engaged in sentencing reform, making bold changes to reduce sentence lengths and allowing more people to earn their release. As a result, California's prison population has dropped from almost [173,000 in 2006](#)<sup>1</sup> to 93,157 today<sup>2</sup> (December 2023). California has also stopped use of all private prisons and has [closed two state prisons](#)<sup>3</sup> and several yards.

**Yet, the work to improve public safety and end mass incarceration in California is far from complete.** While 95% of people incarcerated in California will eventually be released, [45%](#)<sup>4</sup> of those released in 2018 received a conviction within three years and 20% returned to prison. The state still ranks in the [top 10](#)<sup>5</sup> for having a disproportionate representation of people of color in its prisons. [California spends an average of \\$106,000](#)<sup>6</sup> to incarcerate each person per year, and still, many people leave prison worse than they arrive, having experienced a dehumanizing and traumatizing environment without the rehabilitative resources they need to reenter the community successfully: access to jobs, healthcare, education, housing, and reunification with family. Including at San Quentin.

On average, prisons do not create positive outcomes for residents, staff or victims/survivors. Emerging evidence shows that prisons undermine the health and wellbeing of staff. And according to a 2022 survey of crime victim/survivors by the Alliance for Safety and Justice, by a [margin of 3 to 1](#)<sup>7</sup> (72% to 22%), “victims prefer holding people accountable through options beyond just prison,

such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment, drug treatment, community supervision, or community service.” **From a humanitarian, public health, and public safety perspective, it is time for change.**

**California must do more to ensure people serving time receive the tools to succeed after release and never return to prison.**

**We must reduce the harm to residents and staff in our prisons by improving dignity, optimizing humanity, providing incarcerated people the tools they need to become the best versions of themselves before returning home, and creating a work environment that supports rehabilitation.** Changing our widespread reliance on punitive incarceration as the primary response to interpersonal harm will take time, but we must start. This report describes recommendations for how to begin to bring San Quentin's strong programming and comparatively positive culture to the next level — to one that is focused on rehabilitation.

**Our recommendations center on three key principles** to shift San Quentin from a prison ultimately focused on punishment, to a center primarily focused on rehabilitation and human dignity:

- **Focus on reentry.** All time in prison should focus on helping people gain skills and treatment needed to make amends and successfully reenter society. Residents must have a detailed rehabilitation plan and equitable access to educational, vocational and treatment programs.
- **Normalize the environment as much as possible.** The lived experience at San Quentin, including staff-resident interactions, must be as similar to the community as possible and must be focused on rehabilitation and healing to facilitate the eventual return home. This requires updates to physical spaces that fall below present day standards.
- **Establish a correctional culture focused on rehabilitation.** All prison staff (custody, healthcare and beyond) must have the opportunity, training, incentive and professional obligation to support incarcerated people to change their lives and support their rehabilitation throughout their incarceration.



The CDCR is currently leading a system-wide change it has named [‘The California Model’](#),<sup>8</sup> focused on implementing domestic and international best practices to shift its culture from punitive to rehabilitative, and to ensure people serve their time in a more humane environment. In developing this report, we have endeavored to align with this approach so that San Quentin becomes an example of how to embody the state’s emerging vision. See [Background: The California Model](#).

The downward population trend in California’s prisons must continue and accelerate. **The recommendations in this report do not replace the need for additional proactive policy decisions and initiatives to continue reducing California’s prison population, including increasing investments in community-based solutions to interpersonal violence, and improved access to the community-based healthcare, education, housing, and social services that can keep people out of prison in the first place.**

On a related note, as an Advisory Council, we have spoken to experts, advocates, people who are incarcerated, prison staff, interest groups, community leaders, and those most likely to be affected by our recommendations. From these conversations, we have come to the conclusion **there are three interrelated core tensions underlying San Quentin’s evolution to a rehabilitation center. There is no magic wand that can resolve all of these tensions.**

First, San Quentin already has among the best culture and rehabilitation-focused programming of all of CDCR’s prisons. Those who are incarcerated sometimes wait years for the opportunity to transfer to San Quentin. It is why it was chosen for this transformation opportunity, and why **the goal should be for as many people as possible to have access to the programming and opportunities available at San Quentin.**

And yet, as California’s oldest prison, San Quentin is dilapidated. The cost of upgrading it — just to make basic repairs and bring it up to code — is prohibitive. That does not even include the cost of increasing access to more rehabilitative programming. **The only way to make the environment more livable and rehabilitative, and to give all who are incarcerated at San Quentin access to its strong programming, is to reduce the population and fund efforts to improve the living conditions of those who are still incarcerated.** Yet, many Californians also do not want any more resources to be spent on the building or renovation of prisons.

For true transformation to take place in California’s penal system, many (including many of us on the Advisory Council) believe that **funds should be diverted away from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation towards community-based solutions** to both prevent crime and expand alternative, non-incarcerative approaches to addressing interpersonal harm. **But reducing funds also means that people who are still incarcerated will not have increased access to more programming or improved, less dehumanizing environments. Many consider it unethical to keep people incarcerated without immediately investing in creating more humane environments and interactions in prisons.**

Policymakers will also be grappling with these tradeoffs. The cost of transforming San Quentin into a center that meets modern rehabilitative standards by providing services, evidence-based programs, and training, while also upgrading the facilities would be prohibitive, so prioritization will need to occur.

**We recognize these complex tensions. The Co-Chairs have worked to integrate disparate priorities and perspectives throughout this report. We have included many perspectives (which are, at times, at odds with one another), rather than submit a short report in which every point gained full consensus. As such, the recommendations in this report should be viewed as a starting point for how to transform San Quentin, and a guide for ways to increase California’s reliance on rehabilitation over punishment in the service of improving public safety.**



On Nov. 3, 2023, San Quentin’s residents and correctional officers played in a friendly basketball game as part of a larger effort to foster positive interactions. (Photo by [Vincent O’Bannon, San Quentin News](#))



## Lead recommendations

Below are the Advisory Council's *lead recommendations* to transform San Quentin, drawn from sections of the report.

### **PROVIDE EVERY RESIDENT WITH A REHABILITATION & REENTRY PLAN AND A REENTRY SUPPORT TEAM FROM DAY ONE.**

The Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan should have broad focus, from healthcare and substance use treatment to training for employment and preparation for community supervision (parole or probation). It should be updated regularly in collaboration with a Rehabilitation Team of trained staff and peer-mentors who are deeply familiar with rehabilitation opportunities at San Quentin and beyond. [Section 03](#)

### **OPTIMIZE EDUCATION, JOB READINESS, AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMMING.**

Every resident should have the opportunity to meet their educational and treatment needs. Therefore, establish an Office of the Associate Warden of Programs to assess program quality and integrate programming and custody operations. Hire more teachers, facilitators and peer-mentors, and establish the infrastructure and continued funding for CBOs to offer rehabilitation and reentry programming throughout CDCR. Increase use and breadth of restorative justice programming with victims/survivors, family members, and the San Quentin community. Prioritize workforce programs that connect people to post-release jobs. [Recommendations 1.4 & 5.3 & 7.1 & 7.5 & Section 4](#)

### **EVOLVE THE TRAINING FOR CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS TO CREATE A MORE REHABILITATIVE CULTURE.**

Correctional officer and all staff training must extend beyond a focus on security and maintaining order to include equal amounts of training in rehabilitation, normalization, behavior change, trauma-informed care, and interpersonal or "dynamic" security. [Section 2](#)

### **REDUCE THE POPULATION SIGNIFICANTLY TO END DOUBLE-CELLING, AND TO ENSURE GREATER ACCESS TO REHABILITATIVE PROGRAMS.**

San Quentin, with a design capacity of 3,084, currently houses 3,447 people.<sup>9</sup> Reduce the population to allow for single-occupancy cells and no bunk beds, and greater access to programming. Beyond San Quentin, continue to reduce California's prison population. Closing down of prisons must be met with population reduction to avoid overcrowding of other facilities. [Recommendation 1.1](#)

### **ELIMINATE "DEATH ROW" AND REPLACE IT WITH DIGNIFIED HOUSING.**

Permanently shut down "death row." Evaluate options to create improved housing in its stead, such as replacing the decrepit East Block with innovative modular housing or renovating it to be more conducive to rehabilitation. This should be part of a longer-term effort to create more dignified housing throughout San Quentin.

[Recommendation 1.1 & Appendix C](#)

### **REDUCE PRISON BEDS IN FAVOR OF PRE-RELEASE REENTRY BEDS THAT HAVE BEEN PROVEN TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY.**

Transformational reentry requires creating successful pathways to the community. Reduce CDCR prison beds and add pre-reentry beds ("MCRP" beds) that are independently owned and managed by community-based organizations (CBOs). Consider establishing one or two 200-person reentry campuses on San Quentin's property (outside prison walls) with the highest priority given to San Quentin residents. Dedicate some of these beds, and others throughout the state, to provide residential reentry services to those who are released after serving long sentences. [Recommendation 8.1](#)

### **THE CONSTRUCTION COST OF THE NEW BUILDING 38 SHOULD BE CUT BY AT LEAST ONE THIRD.**

The Legislature has funded a new Building 38 which will increase access to rehabilitative programs and services. In the new building, prioritize spaces for education and job training and reduce the cost by at least one third. [Section 11](#)

### **REDIRECT THE REMAINING FUNDS (AT LEAST \$120M) TO CAMPUS UPGRADES THAT NORMALIZE THE ENVIRONMENT.**

Use saved capital improvement funds to update/transform other spaces (e.g., store, café, town square, family visitation areas, housing improvements) to allow residents to engage in more "normal" interactions and life activities. [Recommendations 1.3 & 2.5 & 6.3](#)

### **IMPROVE STAFF HOUSING AND WORK SPACE.**

Many staff (including custody, healthcare, teachers, and others) have unreasonable commutes and some live in substandard trailers on San Quentin property. Improve the staff's trailer grounds and introduce work space improvements such as break rooms and staff showers at San Quentin. [Section 09](#)

### **ENSURE ONGOING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SAN QUENTIN'S TRANSFORMATION.**

Establish a program team and a series of longer-term project-specific advisory boards to consider and help operationalize the efforts recommended in this report. Ensure all shareholders, including staff, victims/survivors and San Quentin residents, have a voice and window into the implementation of this project and its impact on public safety. [Section 10](#)

# Background

## HOW WE GOT HERE:

### DECADES OF MASS INCARCERATION

**Many rehabilitative and educational programs at San Quentin are considered outstanding and have been developed by residents at San Quentin and/or committed community-led organizations. San Quentin was chosen for this initiative because it has already emerged as a facility dedicated to programming, positive culture and personal transformation.**

That said, San Quentin's physical state is antiquated. It was first built in 1852 to house California's entire incarcerated population. Over the next 150 years, the U.S. experienced a gutting of our public healthcare and social service systems, along with some of the world's most stringent and racially-biased sentencing laws, resulting in the unprecedented growth of our prison population. The U.S. now [incarcerates more of its citizens than almost any other nation](#),<sup>9</sup> a phenomenon referred to as "mass incarceration."

Over the past few decades, with the purported intention of addressing interpersonal harm, California built and litigated our way into a bloated and punitive prison system that is expensive, ineffective, unhealthy, and that undermines human dignity.

The impact of mass incarceration on everyday life at San Quentin has been profound. Currently, with an official "design capacity" of 3,084, San Quentin houses more than 3,400 people,<sup>10</sup> according to CDCR. Cells measuring approximately 5 feet by 11 feet that were designed to house one person now house two people in bunks, and when that housing was not sufficient, 200-person dormitories were constructed to house even more people.

These housing units reflected the political norms of the time they were built — prisons were used as a solely punitive measure and a site for warehousing people; rehabilitation was explicitly removed from the system's mission. Today, these cells fall far below statewide or national institutional standards.

Our current approach to addressing interpersonal harm — with a focus on punitive policies and interactions between staff and incarcerated people — does not make our society safer. Over time, imprisonment has not proven to reduce the risk of future crime and may even have an opposite effect, by disrupting people's lives, undermining

economic and housing opportunities, exposing people to criminogenic influences, and causing lasting adverse intergenerational impacts on families and communities.

Instead, we must follow emerging evidence which suggests that better outcomes are associated with more rehabilitative approaches, more "normal" living environments, and more productive staff-resident interactions. For example, [one California study](#)<sup>11</sup> showed that people with the same security classification (Level III) were more likely to engage in future crime when released from a higher security prison (Level III) than a lower security prison (Level I).

People who complete rehabilitative programming, including: [education](#)<sup>12</sup>, [substance use and mental health treatment](#)<sup>13</sup>, and [family reconnection](#)<sup>14</sup> have increased successful outcomes upon release. Further, preparation for reentry (e.g. [securing employment, housing, education, healthcare](#)) are critical to reducing recidivism.<sup>15</sup> Many of these programs and services are provided by CBOs throughout CDCR facilities. We believe optimizing access to these services should be the primary focus of all prison staff and policies throughout CDCR, although this council's mandate was to make recommendations for San Quentin in particular. *See [Appendix A](#) for more on the Advisory Council's scope and process.*

### UNDERSTANDING THE ROOT CAUSES OF INCARCERATION

It is important to note that many crimes emerge in the setting of poverty, and/or when people have limited access to quality education, housing, healthcare, and opportunity. Further, it is well-documented that [Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people](#)<sup>16</sup> (who are also more likely to be poor due to historic and structural racism and barriers to economic opportunity) experience harsher punishment than their white counterparts. [LGBTQIA+ people](#),<sup>17</sup> and particularly transgender and gender non-conforming people, also disproportionately experience these harms, especially when they are also Black, Indigenous, or Latinx.

**Sentencing people to incarceration does not address the root causes of crime.** Instead, these root causes must be met with better access to jobs, housing, healthcare, opportunity, community violence reduction efforts, and education throughout the life course, alongside improvements in sentencing and equitable, unbiased legal processes. These community investments, while outside the scope of this report, are the most important deterrents to interpersonal harm and to ensuring public safety.

## THE CALIFORNIA MODEL

The creation of the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center reflects a larger vision developed by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) referred to as “The California Model.” According to the CDCR, “The CA Model is a paradigm shift that draws on international best practices to change culture within the state’s prisons. The CA Model aims to develop a human-centered culture of healing, positive staff-resident communication, and improved living and working conditions. In cohesion, these principles will improve public safety, rehabilitation and reentry, as well as outcomes.”

The suggestions for how to transform San Quentin outlined in this report are meant to serve as an embodiment of this vision in practice. It is our hope that our recommendations are also useful in transforming practices at other Level 2 facilities or yards throughout the state.

CDCR has been working with multidisciplinary experts to learn from domestic and international best practices and principles in the development of the “California Model.” Its stated goal is to build safer communities through rehabilitation, education, restorative justice and reentry.

The CDCR describes the California Model’s four pillars (described below) as being the foundation for a prison system that better serves public safety by returning people to their communities with the tools needed to succeed and live a life without crime. Where possible, the Advisory Council has drawn on, or referred to, these pillars for our recommendations.

## THE FOUR PILLARS OF CDCR’S “CALIFORNIA MODEL”<sup>18</sup>

### DYNAMIC SECURITY

An approach to security that promotes positive professional relationships between staff and incarcerated people. This is accomplished through purposeful activities and professional, positive, and respectful communication.

### NORMALIZATION

A concept that aims to bring life in prison as close as possible to life outside of prison. The more life in prison resembles life in the community, the easier it will be for people to transition and adjust to life in the community upon release.

### PEER MENTORSHIP

The CDCR aims to grow opportunities for incarcerated people to be trained to use their lived experiences to mentor and support their peers.

### BECOME A TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATION

The department states it is committed to improving the practices, policies, and culture of the entire department by educating staff at all levels to recognize the impacts of trauma and ensure the physical and emotional safety of all staff and incarcerated individuals.



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## 11 [Section 01: Create the Foundational Conditions for Rehabilitation](#)

### *Recommendations—*

- 1.1 Create single-cell and single-bunk housing throughout San Quentin, which will require significantly reducing the population
- 1.2 Maintain an effective mix of those with determinant and indeterminate sentences
- 1.3 Create “normalized” experiences and spaces at San Quentin
- 1.4 Eliminate waitlists for critical ISUDT and GED programs
- 1.5 Make good nutrition foundational to the San Quentin experience

## 29 [Section 02: Create a Rehabilitative Culture that Supports Reentry](#)

### *Recommendations—*

- 2.1 Implement continuing education for all prison staff to introduce and establish new expectations and norms
- 2.2 Create a new role, job description, and training for a “Community Correctional Officer”
- 2.3 Update policies to encourage Correctional Officers and other staff to support residents’ rehabilitation
- 2.4 Create new staff communication channels to better support rehabilitation
- 2.5 Create new programming and spaces that allow residents and staff to interact on a professional level

## 43 [Section 03: Build a Supported Pathway to Rehabilitation & Reentry](#)

### *Recommendations—*

- 3.1 Create a Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan for every resident during orientation and update it continually
- 3.2 Create a Rehabilitation Team that acts as a support team for residents
- 3.3 Help people prepare for parole
- 3.4 Establish a Center for Rehabilitation Planning

## 55 [Section 04: Enable Equitable Access to Programming](#)

### *Recommendations—*

- 4.1 Establish an Office of Associate Warden of Programs
- 4.2 Invest in strategies to reduce waitlists
- 4.3 Digitize program operations
- 4.4 Set standards for and continuously evaluate programs for quality assurance
- 4.5 Create a program incubator for residents to pilot and grow needed programs
- 4.6 Proactively meet accessibility needs

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## 68 [Section 05: Create the Conditions for Healing and Making Amends](#)

### *Recommendations—*

- 5.1 Expand awareness, access, and participation in mental health services and substance use disorder treatment
- 5.2 Expand programs, spaces, and opportunities for residents to engage in rehabilitative healing
- 5.3 Coordinate and expand restorative justice programs and victim/survivor services
- 5.4 Support current and new programs specifically for victims/survivors
- 5.5 Change policies so incarcerated people can pay restitution and leave prison with less debt

## 79 [Section 06: Strengthen Connections with Family and Community](#)

### *Recommendations—*

- 6.1 Expand programming to connect residents with their families
- 6.2 Modify policies and services to make family connections easier, more frequent, and more meaningful
- 6.3 Engage residents in the design and building of a new visitation space

## 87 [Section 07: Provide Pathways to Meaningful Employment Before Reentry](#)

### *Recommendations—*

- 7.1 Establish local employment pipelines and training for job placement
- 7.2 Offer fair pay for prison work
- 7.3 Expand paid and credentialed peer mentorship opportunities
- 7.4 Provide remote work opportunities and the tools and space to support them
- 7.5 Sustain opportunities for residents to engage in learning that improves confidence, knowledge, and skills

## 107 [Section 08: Transition People into Community Environments Successfully](#)

### *Recommendations—*

- 8.1 Consider developing a Pre-release Community Reentry Program (e.g., MCRP) on San Quentin state property, outside the prison walls
- 8.2 Expand foundational support after reentry

## 116 [Section 09: Reduce High Turnover by Providing Services for Staff](#)

### *Recommendations—*

- 9.1 Improve living conditions for staff
- 9.2 Continue to provide mental health services for staff and destigmatize these services
- 9.3 Create dedicated staff space for eating, storage and gathering

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	<i>Recommendations—</i>
10.1	Establish a Program Management Team
10.2	Establish a fund and pathways for nonprofit, community-based organizations to provide services
10.3	Explore innovative funding sources within and beyond state government
10.4	Enable ongoing impact evaluation, measurement, and iteration
10.5	Continue to share the rehabilitative power of San Quentin’s residents with the public
10.6	Establish advisory boards to support San Quentin transformation efforts
135	<a href="#">Section 11: Building 38 Considerations</a>
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# O I

# Create the Foundational Conditions for Rehabilitation

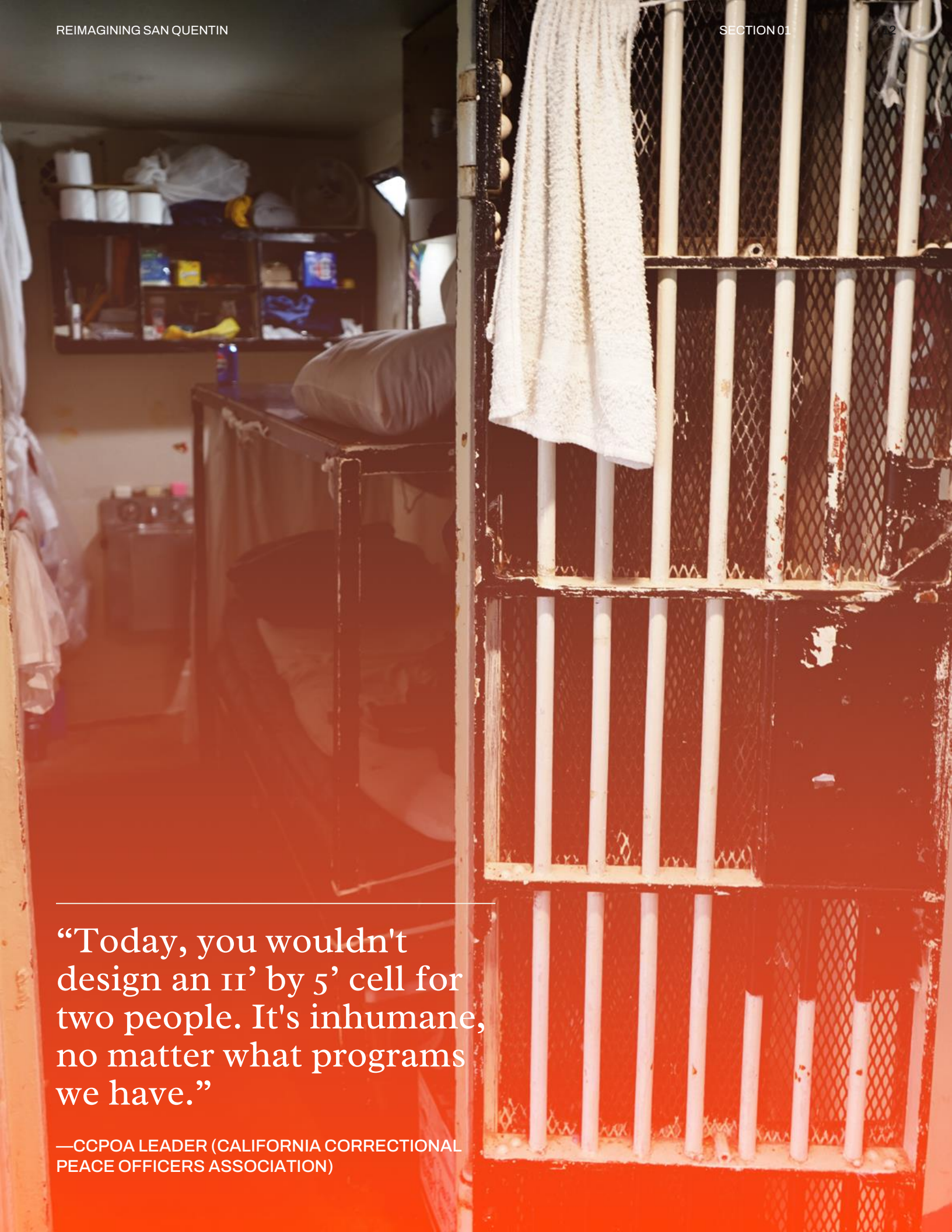
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## OBJECTIVE

Create dignified conditions for all at San Quentin, providing housing, education, and programs that set the stage for personal growth and transformation.

## DATA POINT

Though San Quentin has a design capacity of 3,084 residents, it currently houses more than 3,400 people.<sup>19</sup>

A photograph of a prison cell. In the foreground, a metal bed frame with a mattress is visible. To the right, a door with vertical bars and a mesh screen is partially open, with a white towel hanging from it. The background shows a small table with various items, including a water bottle and some containers. The lighting is dim, and the overall tone is somber.

“Today, you wouldn't design an 11' by 5' cell for two people. It's inhumane, no matter what programs we have.”

—CCPOA LEADER (CALIFORNIA CORRECTIONAL PEACE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION)

# People cannot transform their lives when they are in survival mode.

## THE CHALLENGE

If we are asking people who are incarcerated to change their lives to become better community members, then prisons must offer dignified living conditions that set the stage for engaging in personal growth and transformation. Currently, San Quentin is overcrowded, with antiquated housing conditions, a lack of normal community-like experiences, and inadequate access to healthy food.

While the planned creation of a new programming building is an incredible opportunity for the people who live and work at San Quentin, it is the living conditions — if unchanged — that will compromise San Quentin's capacity to become a model rehabilitation center.

The current population at San Quentin is 12% over design capacity. The old facility, designed for 3,084 people, currently houses 3,447 individuals.<sup>19</sup> According to people who currently or have lived and worked at San Quentin, this overcrowding has resulted in:

- a lack of access to the programming that residents need, due to long waitlists, lack of staff, and lack of space
- undesirable living conditions (lack of privacy, very small amounts of living space per individual that do not meet current standards for institutional living)
- increased tensions between residents, and between residents and staff
- the possibility of creating unhealthy living conditions, as diseases are more likely to spread in more densely populated areas

Living in an 11'x5' foot cell with another adult and open bars, without the privacy to change one's clothing, spend time alone, or even use the toilet privately is dehumanizing. On a national level, rather than creating an environment that facilitates personal growth and transformation, we have accepted a breeding ground for violence and anger. That anyone living in these conditions can engage in personal change is a testament to their strong character.

Beyond improving living conditions, addressing any existing substance use disorders and providing educational opportunities are critical to ensuring success in prison and upon reentry to society. Without treatment, the risk of continuing or returning to substance use is high. Earning a GED is a main predictor of reducing recidivism and successful reentry. Yet, programming space for both Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT) and General Educational Development (GED) programs are at a premium at San Quentin making access to these programs an issue. [Of note, ISUDT includes Cognitive Behavior Interventions (CBI), Medication-Assisted Therapies (MAT), and [other supportive services](#).<sup>20</sup>]

The California Legislature has announced several prison closures. AB 32 bars CDCR from entering into or renewing a contract with a private prison company after January 1, 2020, and prevents California from holding incarcerated people in for-profit prison facilities starting in 2028. As of November 2023, CDCR has closed two state prisons (Deuel Vocational Institution and California Correctional Center) and seven yards across five prisons (at California Rehabilitation Center, California Institution for Men, California Correctional Institution, California Men's Colony, and Pelican Bay). Additionally, there is a planned closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP) by 2025, and CoreCivic for California City Correctional Facility will be closed through contract termination by 2024.

**We support the closure of prisons — particularly private prisons profiting from the incarceration of Californians.** Without the commensurate release of incarcerated people, existing facilities have become - and will continue to become - overcrowded. **Therefore, we also recommend reducing the prison population by the same number of people held by each prison slated for closure to avoid overcrowding in other prisons.**



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- I.1** Create single-cell and single-bunk housing throughout San Quentin, which will require significantly reducing the population
- I.2** Maintain an effective mix of those with determinant and indeterminate sentences
- I.3** Create “normalized” experiences and spaces at San Quentin
- I.4** Eliminate waitlists for critical ISUDT and GED programs
- I.5** Make good nutrition foundational to the San Quentin experience



These are bunks in San Quentin's H Unit Housing, a dormitory which lacks privacy and access to personal living space.

## I.I— Create single-cell and single-bunk housing throughout San Quentin, which will require significantly reducing the population

San Quentin's celled housing units, built in the early 1900s, do not comport with modern-day institutional living standards. To bring San Quentin housing up to modern-day standards would constitute a significant, long-term investment. Such funding decisions are complex and must balance conflicting priorities, most notably a need to fund more community-based healthcare and social services that can drive less crime (and reduce the carceral budget) alongside safe, humane living quarters for people who are institutionalized. In the short term, **we recommend taking steps to improve the dignity of the tiered cells living environment and dormitory experience as soon as possible.**

**It is extremely expensive to incarcerate people humanely, a reality that California policy makers should take into account when considering bills intended to reduce the prison population.** While the population in California's prisons has been reduced from a high of 173,000 to currently 93,157 (December 2023).<sup>21</sup> California incarcerates [549 people per 100,000](#), in comparison to Norway's incarceration rate of [54 people per 100,000](#).<sup>22</sup>

In recent years, California has closed prisons, and it aims to close several more in coming years. These prison closures must also be accompanied by a concurrent and equal reduction in the overall prison population to avoid overcrowding San Quentin and the remaining California state prisons. For example, if 5 prisons with a population of approximately 3,500 each were slated for closure, the state should be required to release or parole 17,500 people alongside the prison closures.

We recommend using the cost savings generated from prison closures and population reduction to both (1) invest in community-based solutions to reduce crime and recidivism and (2) invest in bringing the oldest prison living quarters up to modern day standards throughout the state (including at San Quentin). The most cost-efficient first steps at San Quentin are to convert all celled housing to single occupancy, convert dormitories to single (rather than double bunk) beds, and invest in an external building evaluation to determine the most cost efficient approaches to modernizing and/or rebuilding existing tiered cell housing units throughout San Quentin.

**We strongly recommend eliminating mandatory double celling (unless it meets the personal needs of the individual). This will result in a reduction in population at San Quentin from its current level of over 3,400 to between 2,200 and 2,600.**

# Housing at San Quentin does not meet modern standards

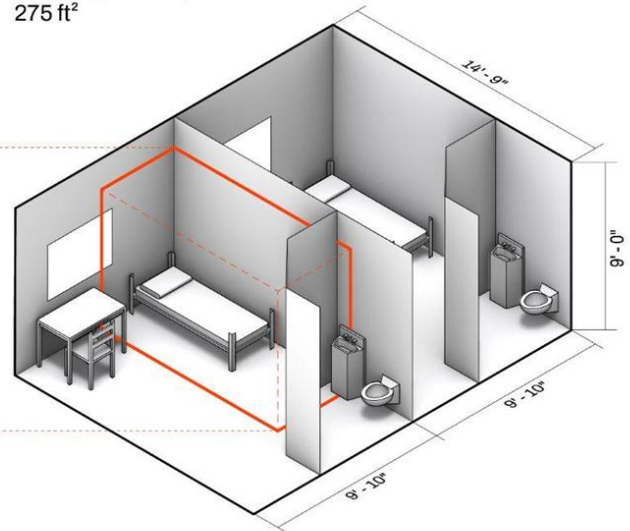
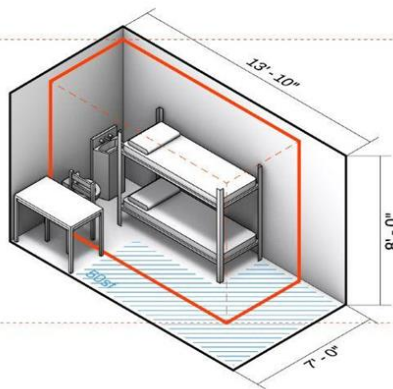
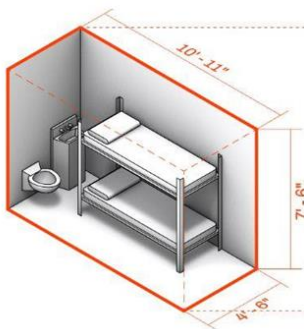
The double-occupancy cells in North Block at San Quentin are only 46 square feet, according to San Quentin Plant Operations. The American Correctional Association recommends that a double occupancy is [92 square feet](#).<sup>23</sup> In comparison, we include the size of two single occupancy cells in Bergen Prison in Norway, which are each [137.5 square feet](#)<sup>24</sup> and have a privacy partition wall between the beds and toilets.

The orange line in each of the renderings below refers to the size of a double occupancy cell in San Quentin compared to the other spaces. The blue lines in the ACA recommendation indicate “unencumbered space,” which is space that is not taken up by furnishings or fixtures. *For details on the cell sizes, see [Appendix B](#).*

San Quentin  
North Block  
Double Occupancy  
46 ft<sup>2</sup>

American Correctional  
Association Recommendation  
Double Occupancy  
92 ft<sup>2</sup>

Bergen Prison,  
Norway  
Two Single Occupancies  
275 ft<sup>2</sup>



- 2x bed
- 1x toilet
- 1x sink

- + desk & chair required
- + 50 ft<sup>2</sup> unencumbered space
- + 7' minimum dimension
- + 8' minimum height

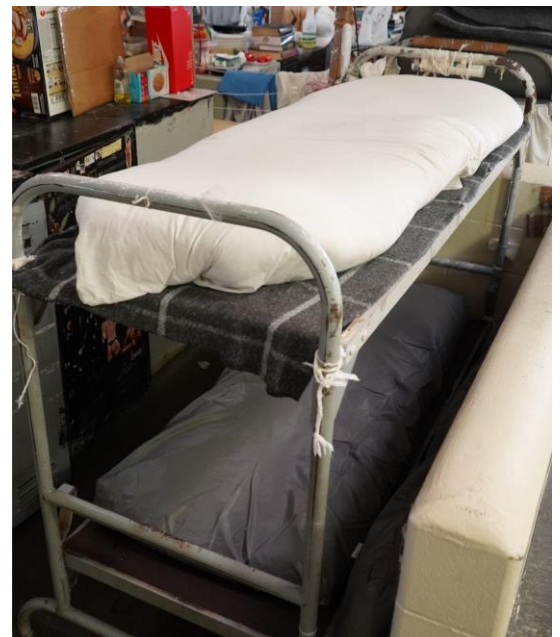
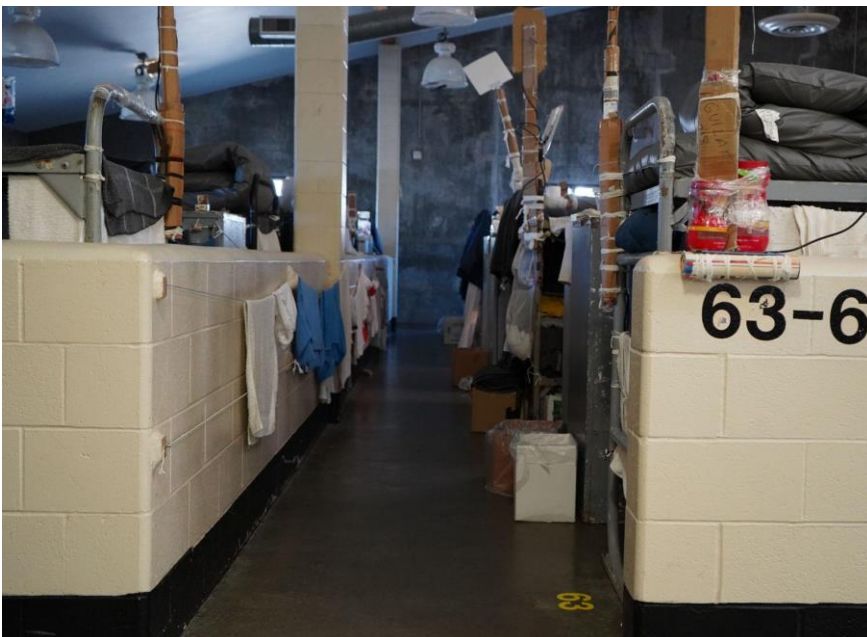
- + individual rooms
- + individual desk & chair
- + private bathrooms



## San Quentin's H Unit housing



These photos are from one of H Unit's five dormitory-style buildings. Two of the buildings house "Enhanced Outpatients" and three of the buildings house the General Population. These large warehouses hold 100-200 residents each, all in an open space. Most of these beds are double bunk beds.

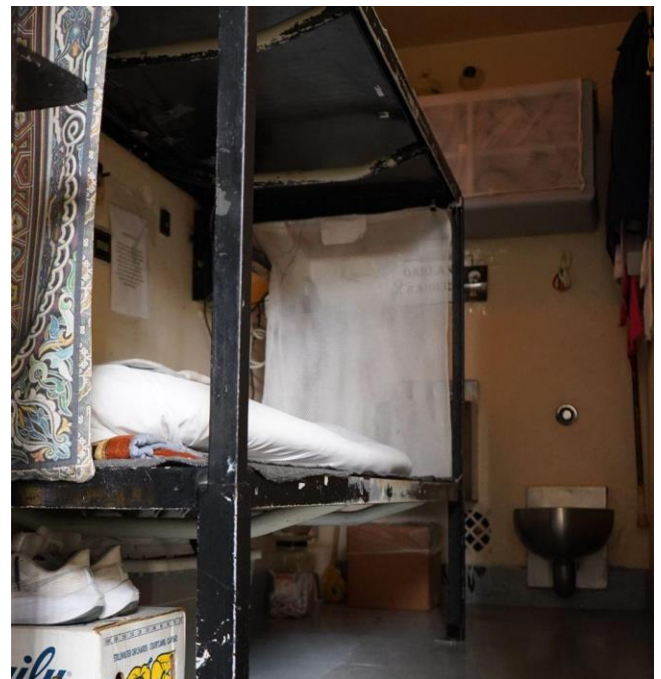
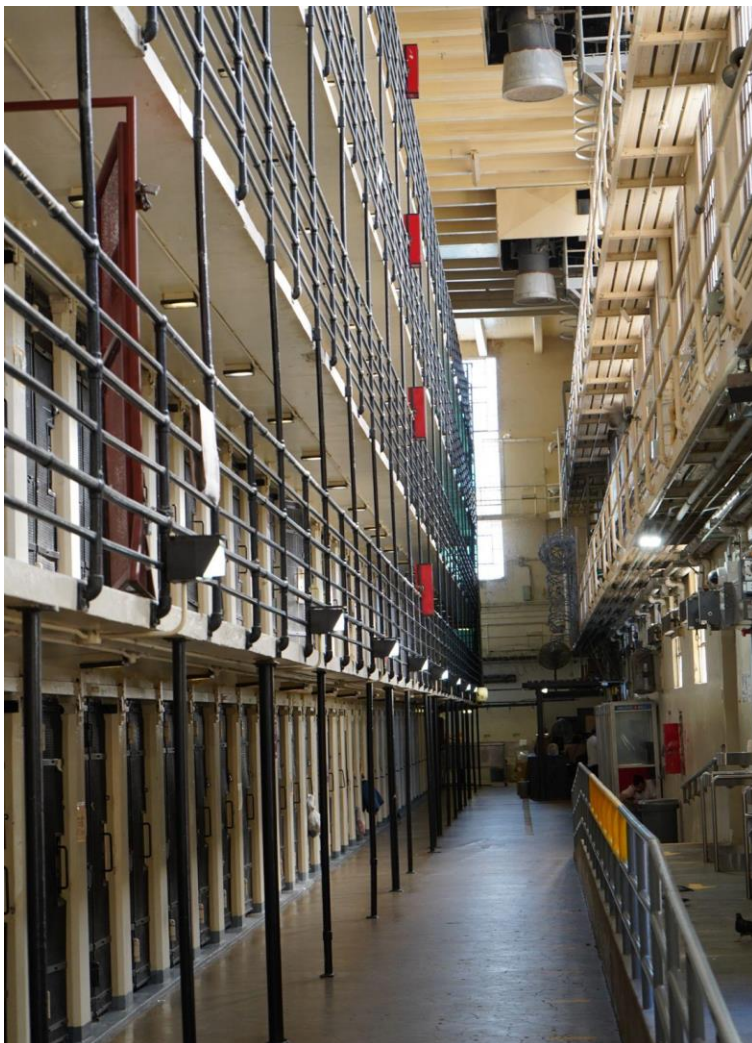




## San Quentin's North Block housing



North Block has 4' 6" X 10' 11" cells, shown here, that each hold two people, two bunks, a sink and a toilet without privacy. North Block was built in 1932, and it does not meet today's standards in terms of its limited square footage.







As a point of comparison, these photos are from rehabilitative carceral facilities in Norway. The cell above is in Ringerike Prison. The cell below is in Halden Prison. These cells have private in-room bathrooms with doors.



Above is a working farm at a rehabilitative "Open Prison" in Bastøy, Norway. (Photos courtesy of Amend at UCSF)

## ACTION ITEMS

Reinvest some of the cost savings related to reducing prison footprints and population across the state in more humane housing that better aligns with a rehabilitative mission.

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Reduce San Quentin's population and convert to single cells dorm-by-dorm, including single beds with privacy partitions (rather than bunk beds) in H-Unit.

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Consult with HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) experts from outside of the prison system to determine if any retrofitting options exist for the current housing units. If not, develop a 5-year plan to renovate housing units to a more contemporary standard.

---

Begin a planning process to explore possibilities for transforming East Block (see [Appendix C](#)) in a humane, cost effective way through either renovation or construction of modular housing. Assemble an advisory board that includes currently incarcerated people and staff in this planning process (see [Recommendation 10.6](#)).

---

If new housing and/or renovated housing is introduced at San Quentin, design experts outside of prisons should be consulted to advise on how to minimize ambient sound and improve light throughout, and to ensure creation of an inclusive design that addresses the needs of different populations including older adults, the differently-abled, and transgender populations (to name a few.)

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- San Quentin housing is in need of updating to more contemporary and dignified standards, but investing in housing requires additional investment in the prison which is why we recommend a dedicated planning process.
- Any renovation or reconstruction of East Block should keep in mind that it houses 528 cells, which, if removed, would reduce the capacity of San Quentin, limiting access to the rehabilitative opportunities.



## Recommendation 1.2— Maintain a consistent population mix of those with determinate and indeterminate sentences

San Quentin is for people who are soon to be released *and* people who are expected to stay for long sentences (including “Lifers.”)

Residents with determinate sentences will be going home, whether they rehabilitate or not. If the purpose of San Quentin is to facilitate rehabilitation and successful reentry in service of public safety, delivering on that mission will require making sure a majority population with determinate sentences participate in rehabilitative programming and access reentry services.

At the same time, the current population at San Quentin includes 36% of individuals with indeterminate sentences<sup>25</sup> (e.g., “5 years to life” or “30 years to life,” also known as “Lifers”). Lifers are a stabilizing force in the prison setting, as they are among those most invested in the prison community’s long-term wellbeing. Lifers also provide crucial mentorship for the rest of the population. In the California Model, with its focus on enhancing peer mentorship, Lifers will have increased opportunities to mentor incarcerated peers at San Quentin.

**For these reasons, the Advisory Council recommends that the population mix continue to include approximately 25% - 35% Lifers and that every effort should be made to ensure that Lifers are not forcibly transferred as part of the San Quentin Transformation process.**

We recognize the work that has been done in recent years to bring more Lifers home, and we would like to see continued efforts on the part of state government, CDCR, the Parole Board, District Attorney Offices, and CBOs, among others, to develop more pathways to thoughtful, evidence-based, public safety-oriented approaches to release for individuals with long sentences, particularly for those who have completed years of rehabilitative programs.

**The Advisory Council recognizes that reaching this population goal and mix is beyond our charge. We offer a few ideas about how to maintain the current population mix to maximize the reach of rehabilitative services offered at San Quentin:**

- After earning a mentor certification at San Quentin, Lifers could be given the opportunity to scale mentorship programs at other institutions through voluntary transfers. This would offer the possibility of meaningful, paid work.
- Transfer more people out of San Quentin to statewide MCRPs or CCTRPs, depending on someone’s gender identification.
- Transfer those not taking advantage of rehabilitative programming at San Quentin (after making efforts to engage them).

*Note: The California Committee on the Revision of the Penal Code is providing California’s state leadership with consensus, evidence-based recommendations that are designed to improve public safety and reduce unnecessary incarceration across the state. The Advisory Council recommends that California policy makers follow the Committee’s revision recommendations to reduce the population of people throughout CDCR.*

### ACTION ITEMS

Ensure prison closures are accompanied by concurrent and equal population reduction. The Legislature, sentencing experts, reentry experts, and CDCR must identify appropriate populations that are ready to return home (e.g., Lifers that have completed all rehabilitative programming) so that planned prison closures do not simply translate into more prison overcrowding.

Increase education and support for residents preparing for parole. See [Recommendation 3.3](#).

## Recommendation 1.3— Create more “normalized” experiences and spaces at San Quentin

**The chasm between the carceral experience and living in the community is too wide.** People need opportunities to practice critical life skills and to engage in community-type experiences while incarcerated to minimize the shock of reentry and to optimize their likelihood of post-release success.

**“Normalization” is an international principle that refers to transforming institutional spaces and experiences to be more like those in everyday community life.** Prisons will never be normal environments. It is not “normal” to have some adults controlling the lives and freedom of another group of adults. Recognizing this reality, the goal of “normalization” is to give people opportunities to “practice” for, and become more ready to succeed in, community life as soon as possible during their sentence. It also, by definition, constitutes a more dignified way for adults to live – giving people more autonomy and control of their everyday life and allowing them to be accountable for their day-to-day choices.

This “practice” for community living needs to include allowing people to learn and make mistakes in a controlled environment through exposure to more and more normalized experiences over time—from scheduling medical and other appointments to grocery shopping to leaving the prison on short visits to community.

**Interactions between staff and incarcerated people should also be more like “normal” adult interactions, based on professional, respectful relationships rather than “command and control” interactions,** to reflect the ideal way people interact in the outside community.

These more normal, everyday life experiences should start within the walls of San Quentin and be woven throughout the campus and integrated into day-to-day life.

See [Section 11](#) for additional spatial design principles.

### THE NORMALITY PRINCIPLE

“...the best way to prepare prisoners for normal life is to maintain, as much as possible, a semblance of normal routines in prison. ‘Residents,’ as the prisoners are usually called, get up when their alarm goes off, fix breakfast and head off to work or school. They are paid a decent wage for their labor (and obliged to save a portion so they don’t leave the prison penniless.) Under what is called the ‘normality principle’ they are entitled to recreation, social interaction, regular family contact (including conjugal visits), even fresh air and gardens.”

*From What’s Prison For? Punishment and Rehabilitation in the Age of Mass Incarceration, By Bill Keller, 2022.*




San Quentin’s gardening program.

## Progressive normalization

In the principle of normalization, as someone who is incarcerated progresses on their rehabilitative journey, they are granted increased agency and freedoms once certain criteria are met (and if violations occur, agency and freedoms are reduced and must be earned again.) This means more freedom related to the components of rehabilitation: housing, continuing education, employment, mentorship, relationships, and recreation.

As the person who is incarcerated meets certain criteria, they are given increased agency, freedom, responsibility, and access. They are increasingly “normalizing” to a community setting.



HOUSING  
CONTINUING EDUCATION  
EMPLOYMENT  
MENTORSHIP  
VISITATION  
RECREATION

DAY 1

RELEASE

## ACTION ITEMS

Allow residents to wear their own clothing inside the facility. Begin by identifying key moments where street clothing can be worn: for family visits, graduations, and during visits from employers/workforce development organizations.

Transform the canteen into a self-service grocery store, including a food market, café, or food truck, staffed by residents. Create a paid peer mentoring position around nutritional coaching and food preparation. Enable payments through San Quentin-issued debit cards that draw from prison accounts.

Enable residents to participate in everyday life skills experiences such as kitchen access, cooking classes, self-service laundry. Create access to a shared refrigerator and microwave to store and prepare food. Create paid peer mentorship positions to teach these skills.

Offer program enrollment or healthcare appointments through an app available directly on residents' tablets to make the experience of signing up for classes or appointments more normal. Create a paid peer mentoring position for advising residents on how to troubleshoot this process. Include healthcare and education staff in the process to ensure that residents who are not able to achieve this level of independence have assistance.

Include participation in normalization activities on each person's Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan to optimize the experience of transitioning to a community setting. See [Recommendation 3.1](#).

Revisit and reevaluate the Temporary Community Leave (TCL) process to allow for more opportunities for people who are soon reentering society (e.g., within 6 months) to attend important life events (e.g., graduation, funeral, etc.) while minding public safety concerns. Evaluate policies to ensure costs of these programs do not disproportionately fall on residents' families and loved ones.

Establish opportunities for outings for residents with specific clearances, led by correctional officers and/or other staff/CBOs. Outings might include hikes, bike rides, visits to restaurants, visits to local landmarks, etc. Explore opportunities to connect these opportunities to specific rehabilitation curriculum and to work with other state agencies to plan these outings (e.g., California Department of State Parks and Recreation or California Department of Fish and Wildlife).

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Healthcare and education staff should be involved in helping to match each person's needs and abilities with the normalized activities available to them, as well as a system to identify when someone is not ready for (or is not succeeding in) a particular challenge and/or privilege. For example, if someone is not making medical appointments, but has a chronic medical condition, they will need extra support to ensure they are receiving care.
- Create paid positions and opportunities for residents to work at the grocery store, farmer's market, cafe, and as peer mentors in life skills support programming.
- Some normalization opportunities that are critical to rehabilitation and successful reentry are not feasible in institutional, correctional settings with large populations. These opportunities must be offered outside of the facility and in increasingly normalized community settings. See [Section 08](#).



## Case Study

### Wake Correctional Center (WCC) Community Volunteer Program



WCC in North Carolina allows Community Volunteers to bring residents off-site for up to six hours, up to three times per week to experience everyday activities such as eating at a restaurant. The primary purpose of the Community Volunteer pass is to help residents develop more responsible behavior and to transition back to the community from prison.

These types of opportunities increase normalization and better prepare residents to reintegrate into their communities upon release.

## Recommendation 1.4— Eliminate the waitlists and meet needs for critical GED and ISUDT programs

After program needs are assessed, residents at San Quentin and across CDCR are often put on waitlists for the programming they need. Waitlists are complex and opaque to residents: shifting dynamically based on need and release dates, and sequencing of programs. Many residents believe that it takes too long to get enrolled into some key programs. This recommendation focuses on waiting lists for state-run programs that meet significant, assessed needs, are foundational for other rehabilitative programs, and within the state's purview to change.

**There are waitlists for these programs because of a sizeable population, sizeable need, not enough teachers/facilitators, and not enough space.** We need a multi-pronged approach to address these causes: decarceration of the population over time, hiring more teachers, and creating more programming space. This approach can be applied to both state-run and CBO programs. *See [Recommendation 4.2](#) on strategies to reduce waitlists for all programs.*

Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT), and Basic Education or a General Educational Development (GED) are state-run programs that are foundational to the rehabilitative journey. They are important pre or co-requisites to people engaging in the broader set of available rehabilitative programming. As mentioned, the need for these programs outpace the current capacity (staff and space.) These programs must be expanded—hiring more facilitators and peer mentors, increasing space for programs, and securing more funding.

*Note: If only GED teachers that budgeted are hired and utilized, San Quentin can serve 45% of the residents. If only peer literacy mentors alone are utilized, San Quentin can serve 53% of its residents' needs.*

To improve GED access, teachers and peer literacy mentors need to be hired and fully utilized. 38% of people at San Quentin do not have a GED or high school diploma. Only a quarter of this group (26%) are currently enrolled in programming. San Quentin struggles to hire and retain teachers and facilitators. This is, in part, because pay scales do not sufficiently account for previous experience that GED teachers and vocational instructors may have (e.g., instructors for welding, plumbing, etc.), resulting in lower salaries.

There is existing budget allocation for teachers and peer mentors. According to an analysis by CDCR's Division of Rehabilitative Programming (DRP), **if GED teachers who are already budgeted for are hired and teaching, alongside peer literacy mentors, San Quentin could serve more than 65% of its residents who require GED programming.**<sup>26</sup>

To meet ISUDT needs, the Council recommends hiring more counselors, including formerly incarcerated people, and offering more space for these services. While CDCR/CCHCS is a national leader in the treatment of opiate use in a [correctional setting](#),<sup>27</sup> to further the ISUDT's reach, healthcare staff recommend programming include increased options and capacity to treat stimulant and other drug use. This large and growing problem (within California prisons and in communities outside prison walls) requires more solutions and focus.



## ACTION ITEMS

### *Related to GED*

Fill existing, budgeted positions for GED instructors. Incentivize hiring through housing opportunities and adjusted salaries for cost of living. *See [Recommendation 9.1](#) for more on supportive services for staff.*

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Ensure teachers and facilitators are appropriately placed on HAMS (Hiring Above Minimum Salary) pay scales, by accounting for true work experience and credentials to compete with industry demands in Marin County.

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Expand the implementation of Peer Literacy mentors to increase GED access.

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Identify classroom spaces across campus (e.g., education center, current classrooms, new spaces) for GED programming.

### *Related to ISUDT*

Hire more facilitators and counselors for ISUDT programs and services.

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Provide efficient pathways for clearance for qualified formerly incarcerated ISUDT counselors to begin working within the system and maintain safety standards.

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Create dedicated space in Building 32 for ISUDT to increase space for programming.

---

Identify and implement enhanced treatment opportunities for stimulant drug use through partnerships between CCHCS, CDCR, CBOs, and medical professionals that specialize in stimulant use disorder treatment.

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Integrate Mental Health Services into diagnosis and treatment of dual diagnosis for the SUD population.

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Encourage cooperation among divisions (Division of Rehabilitative Programs, custody, primary care, mental health) to rapidly identify and care for the highest risk incarcerated persons struggling with substance use.

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Expand options for after-care programs that support people after formal programing and in preparation for reentry.

## Recommendation 1.5— Make good nutrition foundational to the San Quentin experience

Critical to health and well-being is access to fresh, healthy, and nutritious food. We recommend healthy food be integrated into multiple aspects of the campus, such as introducing a garden, farmer's market with external vendors, and on-site café and/or restaurant.

*Note: The People in Blue have offered extensive recommendations related to optimizing nutrition and food services in their [report](#)<sup>28</sup>, including clarifications about what constitutes nourishing food, such as taste, and representation for different cultures. The People in Blue are one of many stakeholder groups at San Quentin representing the perspective of residents who can be consulted as new approaches to healthy nutrition are developed for the facility.*

### ACTION ITEMS

Increase access to fresh fruit and vegetables through a farmer's market with external vendors. Provide paid jobs for residents to work at the market. Today, each resident receives 2 pieces of fresh fruit every day. Expand these services with more robust options (e.g., expanding partnership with Insight Garden Project).

Engage residents in the selection of food programs and vendors, especially for any new food services like an on-site cafe or restaurant. Work with local farmers offering "fruit or vegetable of the month" programs.

Revisit existing legislation regarding CDCR food quality and services and vendor restrictions that limit institutional food preparation, storage, and options. Include healthcare leadership in conversations around nutritional options to ensure special diets (e.g., diabetes, heart healthy) are represented.

Create a position for someone with both clinical and food service knowledge to oversee both the CDCR and CCHCS portions of the food process (e.g., budgeting, purchasing, policy, nutritional guidelines).

Adjust the price of food per incarcerated person according to inflation.



# 02

## Create a Rehabilitative Culture that Supports Reentry

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### OBJECTIVE

Shift the culture of San Quentin by reshaping the role and training of staff to focus on rehabilitation and helping residents change their lives for the better.

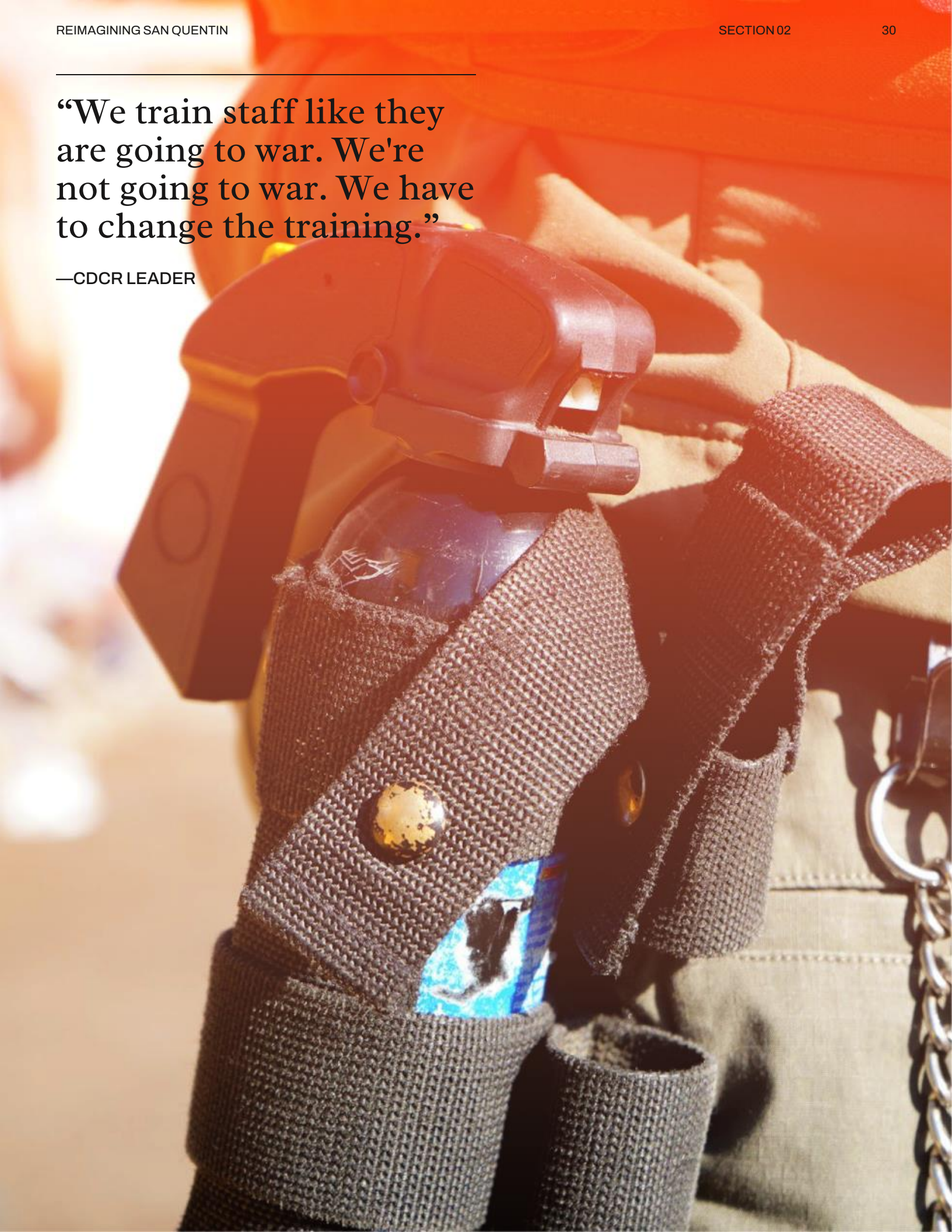
### DATA POINT

The average life expectancy of a correctional officer is [14-21 years shorter](#)<sup>29</sup> than Americans who do not work in prisons.

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“We train staff like they are going to war. We're not going to war. We have to change the training.”

—CDCR LEADER





# Correctional officers should be an integral piece of the rehabilitation puzzle.

## THE CHALLENGE

The mission of CDCR aspires toward rehabilitation: “To facilitate the successful reintegration of the individuals in our care back to their communities.” And yet, **correctional staff receive insufficient professional training to accomplish CDCR’s rehabilitative mission.**

At many prisons in California and across the U.S., prison staff communicate and interact with residents with a punitive, authoritative, and command-heavy approach. They are trained to rely on policies that are purported to protect against “overfamiliarity.” Such policies either outright prohibit—or are misinterpreted to prohibit—pro-social, everyday interactions such as shaking hands or even talking about supporting the same sports team. This approach has helped to fuel the development of an “us versus them” culture in our prisons. **Many staff view themselves strictly as enforcers of rules and regulations in prison rather than considering their own role in the rehabilitation process.**

Transformation of San Quentin from “prison” to “rehabilitative center” will require that CDCR conceptualizes and formalizes the role of custody professionals (and all other prison staff) as being an integral part of the rehabilitative mission of the department.

The adverse (and sometimes toxic) interactions between residents and staff in many US prisons also undermines facility safety by failing to draw on **Dynamic Security**, a cornerstone international security practice (more information on the following page). These dehumanizing interactions also have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of incarcerated people and are increasingly recognized for damaging the health and wellbeing of prison staff.

**Compared to the general population, prison staff in the US experience higher rates of chronic, stress-related conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.** They also have far higher rates of anxiety, depression and suicidality. Research found that custody officers have a [31% rate of experiencing PTSD](#), as compared to 3.5% for the general public.<sup>30</sup>

The average life expectancy of a correctional officer is [14–21 years shorter](#) than Americans who do not work in prisons.<sup>31</sup>

**Improving professional interactions between incarcerated people and staff holds the promise of minimizing the adverse occupational health impacts of prison work while increasing professional satisfaction and, ultimately, recruitment and retention, in the profession.**

San Quentin has an opportunity to become a model site for the new correctional officer role in California prisons, in line with CDCR’s new “California Model,” which is grounded in international principles including “normalization” and “dynamic security”.

To this end, we recommend developing a new correctional officer position that can be rolled out at San Quentin and other California Model test site facilities, “The Community Correctional Officer” (described below), as well as training for all staff throughout CDCR in the basic tenets of the California Model.



*A San Quentin resident and correctional officer interact. (Photo courtesy of the State of California)*

# Dynamic Security

Internationally, the concept of “security” in prisons is generally parsed into several domains—most commonly “Static Security,” “Organizational Security,” and “Dynamic Security.”

“Static Security” is the physical attributes of a prison that help ensure safety—such as walls, bars, and surveillance cameras.

“Organizational Security” is the set of practices that govern everyday life in carceral facilities—population counts, staffing ratios, policies and procedures.

These two forms of security—which US prisons focus on—are best used as part of a 3-legged stool that includes dynamic security.

**“Dynamic Security” is the theory that investing in professional relationships between staff and residents creates healthier people and safer institutions. It allows staff to model appropriate behavior expected of good neighbors in our communities.**

Dynamic Security is an important security tool because both staff and incarcerated people are less likely to respond with violence when they know someone on a personal level. For staff, knowing the people in their care and custody well enables them to detect behavior changes and conflicts between residents before they become a larger issue.

Similarly, it is harder to use force against an officer who is seen as helpful than one who is merely an agent of punishment. It is harder to use force against an incarcerated person when staff humanize them and understand more about the stressors and mental health challenges they face, as well as their strengths.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Implement continuing education for all prison staff to introduce and establish new expectations and norms
- 2.2 Create a new role, job description, and training for a “Community Correctional Officer”
- 2.3 Update policies to encourage Correctional Officers and other staff to support residents’ rehabilitation
- 2.4 Create new staff communication channels to better support rehabilitation
- 2.5 Create new programming and spaces that allow residents and staff to interact on a professional level



## Recommendation 2.1— Implement continuing education for all prison staff to introduce and establish new expectations and norms

Correctional Officers in California receive training in how to maintain safety and security. However, the traditional correctional officer onboarding curriculum reflects a missed opportunity for learning how to develop and maintain positive professional interactions and relationships with incarcerated people that are focused on guiding people to engage in rehabilitative programming, change their behavior, and to model the type of professional interactions that are expected in our communities.

Staff should be trained and incentivized to engage with people who are incarcerated in humanizing ways that establish mutual dignity and respect. Put simply, **people who are incarcerated interact with custody staff multiple times each day, and most of these daily interactions should reflect the expected norms of the outside society and be in service of realizing CDCR's rehabilitative mission.** All prison staff should be well-trained and incentivized to support people to transform their lives for the better. Training curriculum may include modules to familiarize staff with behavior change, substance use treatment, the positive impact of programming, and the importance of family connections and family reunification.

This professional role transformation will require staff to understand how to help incarcerated people to prepare for, and be successful, following release. This might include having great familiarity with community based programs at the facility, encouraging incarcerated people to participate in them, or asking them about their experience in the programs (e.g., anger management or parenting classes), and reminding them to access healthcare (e.g., medical appointments for substance use treatment) or to engage with peer mentors in life management skills (e.g., how to make and keep an appointment with a counselor, how to balance a budget).

**If CDCR's focus is rehabilitation, then all prison staff should be trained to play an important role in realizing the department's rehabilitative mission.** All prison staff in California should learn about the drivers of recidivism, and what their role can be in helping to reduce it.

**Staff should also have opportunities to partner with, and learn from, people who have been successful after incarceration to better learn how to help people in their custody lead more successful post-prison lives in the community.** People who reenter society should be given the opportunity to commend staff who have helped them to change their lives while incarcerated and staff should be celebrated when this occurs. This, in turn, will also motivate staff by providing them with the opportunity to see the positive impact their role in rehabilitative programming can have on community safety.

We recommend that the new approach to training be professionalized, continual, and elevated to maintain a stable and progressive new professionalized prison workforce in California.

## ACTION ITEMS

In line with an all-of-government approach, partner with faculty in the University of California and California State University systems to advise / offer continuing education opportunities for staff. Of note, faculty at UCSF have already begun to partner with CDCR to offer professional programming to prison staff. Consider opportunities to formalize these courses into certificate bearing and college credit bearing opportunities. This continuing education should include scenario / problem-based learning, local quality improvement projects, and establishing a professional community of practice.

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Create a Deputy Superintendent, Higher Education (for Staff) role at CDCR to expand access to university courses and college credits for staff, a position that would be parallel with the newly appointed Deputy Superintendent, Higher Education (for Residents) who is expanding access to college credits for people who are incarcerated.

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Develop a paid train-the-trainer program that engages current prison staff to create peer-led professional development opportunities for other prison staff who do not see themselves attending college courses.

---

Create opportunities for Correctional Officers - and cadets in training - to partner with and learn from successful returning citizens (a paid training-type position for these community members) to celebrate and reinforce what a job well done looks like.

Offer the opportunity for Correctional Officers with expertise in vocational fields such as carpentry, welding, or plumbing to get trained on instructional delivery so that they can join classes delivered by Career and Technical Education (CTE) and/or community-based educators. Note: This should not be interpreted as a way for correctional officers to supplant existing CBO /CTE staff (who would continue to develop instructional design, run and staff all programs). Rather, this would be an opportunity for officers to join these classes for added variety in the workday, enhanced opportunities to form professional interactions with residents, and to receive professional training for teaching opportunities in the future as appropriate.

# Case Study

## North Dakota's Positive Behavior Reports



An example of a policy change that had a positive impact on prison culture comes from North Dakota.

As part of broader reforms, staff in the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation were encouraged to file positive behavior reports (“PBRs”) that recognized incarcerated people for displaying empathy and kindness to others and/or prioritizing their own educational or clinical goals.

One healthcare professional described PBRs as “a systematic way of recognizing people and the good things that they do and the positive parts of themselves, to help them invest in themselves more. Staff now have to sit down and talk about the good things and that actually shifts staff culture a lot in the way that people see their jobs here and breaks through some of that negative mindset that can happen when you’re constantly dealing with situations where you feel a lack of the total control and turn to fear-based responding.”

In fact, as one measure of the shift in focus from punishing negative behaviors to acknowledging positive ones, North Dakota State Prison officers issued [more than twice as many PBRs](#)<sup>31</sup> as rule violations in the Behavioral Intensive Unit (493 PBRs versus 225 rule violations) between 2015 and 2019.

The broader set of reforms that North Dakota initiated, including the use of PBRs, associated policy changes, and staff training, led to a [74% reduction in use of solitary confinement](#)<sup>33</sup> between January 2016 and December 2019 compared to the previous 5 years.



## Recommendation 2.2— Create a new role, job description, and training for a “Community Correctional Officer”

At prisons focused on rehabilitation elsewhere in the world, [prison staff learn to support residents to change their lives for the better](#)<sup>34</sup> by drawing on evidence-based behavioral change tools such as motivational interviewing, mentored feedback, and modeling of everyday, prosocial interactions. They help connect residents with meaningful programs so that they can return to the community better equipped to succeed. In these facilities, the professional relationship between staff and residents is governed by a shared understanding between society and the prison service that behavior change is hard, slow, and is best achieved through positive reinforcement, motivation, connection to healthcare services, peer mentorship, community-based organizations, and role modeling.

**To become a model rehabilitation facility, we recommend creating a new role for select correctional officers at San Quentin who apply to receive enhanced training in how to support rehabilitation. These officers, which we have termed “Community Correctional Officers” (although CDCR might select to use a different name), would embody a mindset and behavior shift towards supporting people to change their lives for the better.**

This role would be designed to enhance the ease with which correctional staff do their work and the efficiency with which they do it. Evidence from other prison systems with a rehabilitative focus suggests that such duties will increase job satisfaction and personal well being, and can therefore be considered a “win / win” for the CDCR and custody staff.

The role would be open to all correctional officers who have completed their basic training and who work at San Quentin or any of the other California Model test sites and would require advanced training. See [Appendix D](#).

## Case Study

### Prison Staff Training: Evergreen State College



Washington State is also bringing “normalization” into its prisons, and has developed a new educational program for correctional staff, as is recommended in this report.

Recently, the Evergreen State College School of Professional and Continuing Education partnered with the Washington State Department of Corrections to [develop a new certificate program](#) designed to empower correctional staff and equip them with specialized skills to make a lasting impact on individuals and communities.

The program includes coursework on how to engage more effectively with individuals and communities affected by trauma, including: Identity development, resilience, restorative justice, intergroup relations, and systems thinking. Courses are taught online by experienced practitioners and academics and made accessible through tuition reimbursement of 75% (covered by Washington State Department of Corrections) upon successful completion. The credits also count towards a Bachelor’s degree.

Similar partnerships between state colleges and universities (via in-person or remote learning) could help train correctional officers at San Quentin with skills to become an active part of residents’ rehabilitation.

## ACTION ITEMS

Set new criteria for hiring into the newly defined role of Community Corrections Officer with criteria that are closer to a counselor or rehabilitative coach.

See [Appendix E](#).

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Partner with state-funded university systems (e.g., UC and CSU) to create a credit-bearing professional development training program for Correctional Officers to build on their existing assets to become Community Corrections Officers (see [Appendix E](#)), based on role criteria. This education would be more time-intensive than the general opportunities available to all prison staff described in [Recommendation 2.1](#).

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Partner with CCPOA, SEIU, and other local bargaining units to identify the right non-financial and financial incentives for training (e.g., better shift plans, prioritized vacation choice, an annual retention stipend, or a newly created pay range).

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Offer rotations for Community Correctional Officers at Bay Area MCRPs/CCTRP or supportive post-release housing units to immerse them in a more normalized setting and give them a sense of the challenges faced by formerly incarcerated people and what it takes to be successful upon release.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Some current custody staff may not opt into the training.
- It will take time for trained staff to grow in number and change culture at the institution level.
- Budgetary constraints will likely dictate that non-financial incentives need to be explored for staff.

## Recommendation 2.3— Update policies to encourage Correctional Officers and other staff to support residents’ rehabilitation

**Every staff position at San Quentin needs to be reoriented toward rehabilitation and successful reentry. New professional roles need to be reinforced and governed by new policies.** Under current policies, it’s difficult for officers to have professional and routinely positive interactions with residents in a manner that helps motivate residents to engage in the rehabilitative efforts offered to prepare for community reentry.

The ability to attain freedom for Lifers, in particular, is greatly affected by staff accounts of their interactions with residents over time. It is important for staff to have a

professional relationship with Lifers so that they can weigh in on the growth they have seen, and / or the additional program that could benefit their rehabilitation.

Therefore, we recommend prioritizing the revision of policies related to “overfamiliarity” to allow staff to have more professional relationships with residents. We recommend that CDCR explore and implement new restorative justice approaches to resolving conflict between residents and staff, to model and participate in the types of behaviors expected in the community, and to educate people on how they can engage in this process.

### ACTION ITEMS

Audit the current policies and procedures in the [Department Operations Manual](#) and [Title 15](#) in the California Code of Regulations. Get feedback from staff, CCPOA, SEIU, residents and other key stakeholders on how current policies and procedures should evolve with an eye toward rehabilitation.

Revise the “overfamiliarity” policy to enable correctional officers to build positive professional relationships with residents; focus on outlining interactions that pose credible threats to safety and security (versus building policies that try to set the exact level of familiarity that should be present in positive social interactions).

Explore developing restorative practices to resolve some resident and prison staff conflicts. An example of this approach can be seen in the [Restoring Promise Initiative](#) run by the Vera Institute of Justice.

Create a “Positive Behavior Report” form for residents. Train staff on how to use it and include it in residents’ case files for advancement and eventually consideration for parole.

Create a “Positive Behavior Report” form for staff, so that residents can offer positive feedback and thanks when indicated. Utilize these forms in annual reviews for staff.



## Recommendation 2.4— Create new staff communication channels to better support rehabilitation

In order to provide consistent, high-quality support to residents, staff need processes that can support their job functions. Staff need better ways to communicate and collaborate.

Today, information flows ad-hoc, and, at times, this occurs to the detriment of residents' rehabilitation and privacy. Critical information can fall through the cracks. San Quentin has an opportunity to create clearer, accountable channels of communication among all parties within the walls of San Quentin, while maintaining the dignity and privacy of residents.

In a prison, anonymity and confidentiality are difficult to maintain. Nevertheless, staff should establish clear protocols to ensure confidentiality in the therapeutic relationship.

### ACTION ITEMS

Implement new communication rituals and tools to relay critical information to those working the next shift and increase the time of overlap between shifts for staff to exchange information in person (e.g., consistent hand-off meetings between shifts). Another option is to communicate with the incoming shift via written hand-off approaches.

Establish a policy for rehabilitative programming (in line with existing policy for mental health and medical encounters) that security officers should only be present in group rehabilitative programming sessions in which the residents talk about sensitive issues when it is required for safety reasons, and even then, staff must remain out of hearing range.

Create a log book that Community Correctional Officers use to document positive interactions with the population, tailored to their new role and responsibilities. CCOs should submit log book entries to supervisors for review and help measure officer effectiveness, positive interactions between residents and staff, and create paths for follow-up that require a supervisor's intervention.

## Recommendation 2.5— Create new programming and spaces that allow residents and staff to interact on a professional level

San Quentin needs more programming and programming spaces that help residents and staff see each other as fellow humans. Creating an environment where residents and staff are able to have professional interactions facilitates the principle of dynamic security. Offering programming for staff and residents together contributes to normalization.

Common spaces accessible to both the incarcerated population and staff could host shared leisure activities such as organized sports tournaments (e.g., pickleball, soccer, basketball, football - activities already underway at San Quentin), family days with staff and residents' family members, or learning opportunities (e.g., lectures, CPR training, movie nights, concerts).

Additionally, some of these common spaces can provide transferable work training skills in restaurant and grocery store management for people who are incarcerated.

### ACTION ITEMS

Repurpose the Upper Yard into a “town square” that is an outdoor gathering space, designed in partnership with CBOs and people who are incarcerated who will be using it for programming.

Build a coffee shop, deli and/or a restaurant or place to eat, relax and watch sports or movies with common seating within the Building 38 site. *See [Section 11](#).*

Expand the opportunity for staff and residents to take coursework together to build relevant skills like Spanish, American Sign Language, and CPR. These skills would expand staff capacity and increase the talent pool of on-site translators and first-responders.

# 03

## Build a Supported Pathway to Rehabilitation & Reentry


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### OBJECTIVE

Help residents begin their rehabilitation plan and start preparing for reentry from the day they arrive at San Quentin (and, eventually, starting the day they arrive at any CDCR facility).

### DATA POINT

Formerly incarcerated people are [unemployed at a rate of over 27%](#)<sup>35</sup> — higher than the total U.S. unemployment rate during any historical period, including the Great Depression.



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“The road to reentry is not a big leap, it's a lot of little leaps. Individual touches can make all the difference in the world.”

—CBO LEADER



## Reentry must begin on day one of incarceration.

Upon arriving at a new carceral facility, each individual must immediately navigate the stressors of their new environment: social politics, racial bias, inaccurate perceptions, gang politics, competition for resources, and more. Within the first few days, people have to make a series of decisions that could set the course of their lives for years to come. The stakes are incredibly high.

Given these critical decisions, it is surprising that people receive limited orientation to San Quentin. Orientation consists of a generic, statewide orientation manual and a ~10-day acclimation period before receiving classification.

Upon classification, Correctional Counselors evaluate the individual's needs and place them on waiting lists to receive education, a job, and substance use treatment (if indicated). Only state-sponsored programs (like ISUDT programs, education, and work opportunities) are included in this initial counseling and waitlist enrollment; residents need to discover and work to enroll in CBO-administered programs themselves.

From there, program enrollment primarily involves going to the physical space that hosts the CBO-led program or chasing down the program leader and putting one's name on a physical sign-up sheet. Residents must wait for opportunities to come up, and are largely left on their own to navigate their rehabilitative programming plan. **The facility must do a better job of engaging people who might fall through the cracks and miss important rehabilitative opportunities.**

It is rare for residents who transfer into San Quentin from elsewhere to have any of their programming completed elsewhere “count.” As a result, many must repeat programs or start over. Further, most programming does not come with a pay number, including ISUDT and basic education. This means many people avoid being assigned to daytime programs because they need the sparse wages provided by regular prison jobs. **Ideally, residents should not have to choose between rehabilitation and an income when the most critical activity is participating in rehabilitation.** Initiatives to increase access, pay, and incentives for programming are vital in this context (e.g. earning credit and reducing sentences for rehabilitative programming through Prop 57, which a [preliminary CDCR study has shown to reduce recidivism](#)<sup>36</sup>). See [Recommendation 7.2](#) for more on *pay and incentives for work and programming*.

Today, Transitions, the Division of Rehabilitative Programs' (DRP) 6-week reentry course for those with an imminent release, reaches 30% of people returning home.<sup>37</sup> DRP's goal is for 100% of people returning home to have a reentry plan. But why wait until reentry is just 6 weeks away? **There is an opportunity to create a robust Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan from day one**, where residents are proactively supported in identifying programs and services that will set them up for success.

Programs alone will not build a pathway to reentry. People also need ongoing guidance and mentorship. Annual classification moments are typically only attended by Correctional Counselors and do not comprehensively take into account progress made through CBO-led programs or other activities. Each Correctional Counselor has over 150 people in their caseload. There is an opportunity to create a broader **Rehabilitation Team** and opportunities for more frequent check-ins as needed.

For some, programming success is limited by opportunities to parole. Currently, residents get little education on the parole process and often have to prepare for parole hearings on their own.

The mission of the CDCR is “to facilitate the successful reintegration of the individuals in our care back to their communities equipped with the tools to be drug-free, healthy, and employable members of society by providing education, treatment, rehabilitative, and restorative justice programs, all in a safe and humane environment.”

However, over the past several decades, the department has over-indexed its focus on “corrections” over “rehabilitation.” It's time to define success as sending people home as better neighbors, parents, employees, and community leaders. This is what it will take to improve public safety.

**To ensure every person who is at San Quentin has the opportunity to be successful upon reentry, we recommend that CDCR help each resident plan how to have their own rehabilitation and reentry needs met starting in the first days of their incarceration using rehabilitation plans and teams.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Create a Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan for every resident during orientation and update it continually
- 3.2 Create a Rehabilitation Team that acts as a support team for residents
- 3.3 Help people prepare for parole
- 3.4 Establish a Center for Rehabilitation and Reentry Planning



Residents at San Quentin attend the Mt. Tamalpais College Research Fair.

## Recommendation 3.1— Create a Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan for every resident during orientation and update it continually

San Quentin residents are at once underserved and simultaneously lost in a sea of programming options, with little support to navigate those options.

In order to enable and incentivize a rehabilitative path, the institution must be oriented in every way to provide an incarcerated person with the tools, resources, and services they will need to build a stable, successful life when they return home: economic stability, healthcare, ability to reunite with family and friends, and securing housing and employment when they return home. All of these skills and assets are needed to break generational cycles of incarceration.

Upon intake to the facility, residents should receive a clear orientation program and begin to develop a plan for rehabilitation. This orientation needs to include navigation of - and placement in - San Quentin's wide array of CBO-led programs in addition to state-mandated programs.

Today, Correctional Counselors meet with residents and assess their eligibility and needs across state-based programs and accommodations on an annual basis, at minimum. Community Resource Managers (CRMs) work with outside groups and resources to coordinate CBO-led programs, donations, community service programs, family services, and religious programming. These two teams must work more closely together. Correctional Counselors should have up-to-date knowledge of CRM activities and CBO-led programs to support residents in recommending the best programs and services to meet their needs.

Upon intake, a resident should meet with a dedicated Correctional Counselor, a representative from the Community Resource Manager's office (e.g., an Associate Governmental Program Analyst, AGPA), and a paid peer mentor who has training in the opportunities available throughout the prison to assess and navigate programs and create a clear **Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan** together. *For more on the proposed Rehabilitation Teams, see [Recommendation 3.2](#).*

Filling out the plan should include selecting and prioritizing both state- and CBO-led programming that maps to each individual's needs across healthcare, educational and workforce development, opportunities to connect with family, arts programming, job assignments, and more.

The plan should include clear milestones and be revisited by a resident on an annual basis at minimum, during classification with their Rehabilitation Team, with ongoing opportunities for each resident to reflect on, review and modify their plan on their tablet and at key milestones. *For more information about digital access to support programming in [Recommendation 4.3](#).*

Building on existing Division of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP) plans, the Transitions program can be customized to an individual's Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan and completed digitally or in classroom settings.

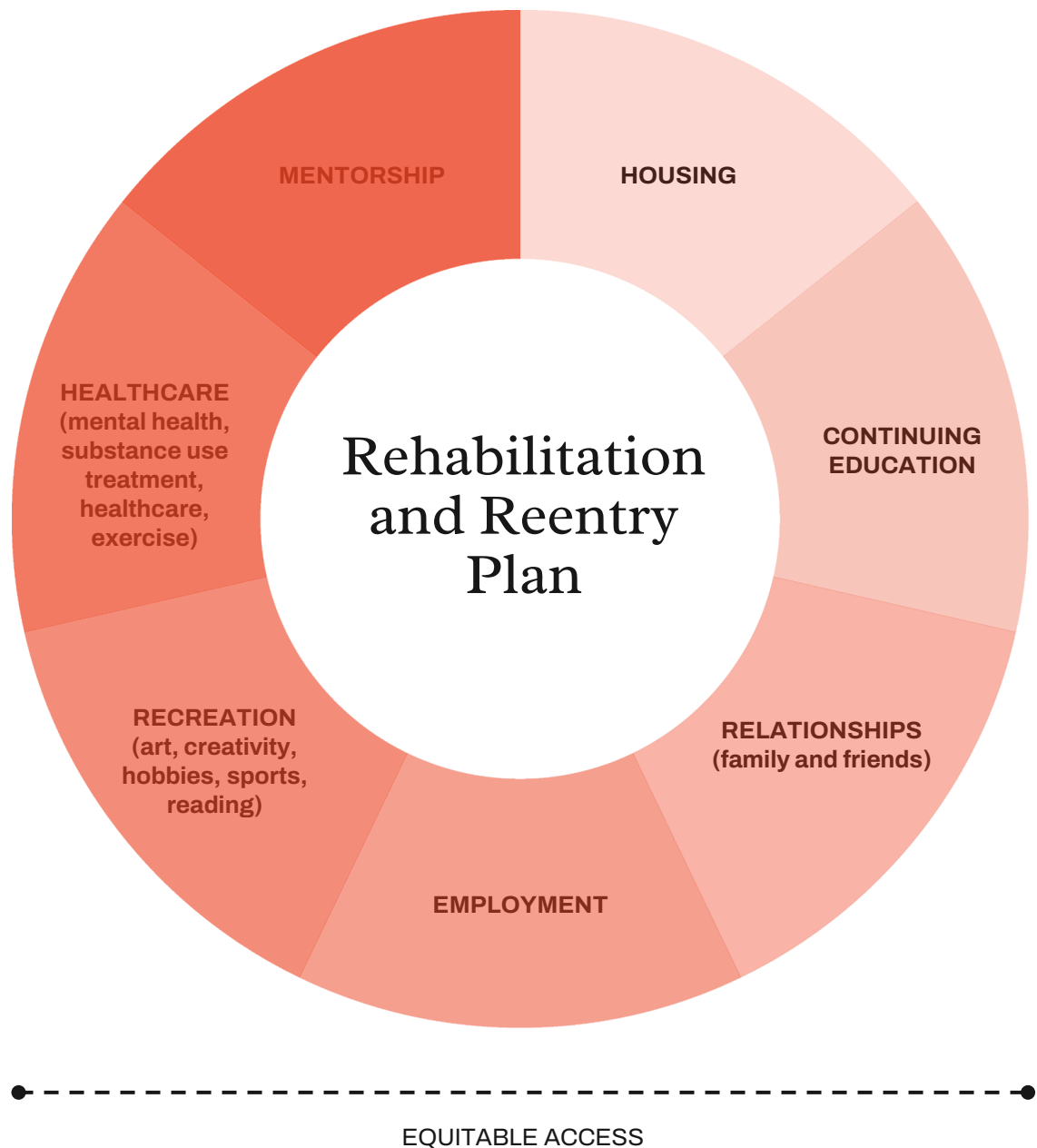
As a rehabilitation center, San Quentin must offer a clear and achievable Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan for incarcerated individuals beginning the moment they arrive. All those who are new to San Quentin should engage in a refreshed orientation program to support their transition.

Note: This solution is in line with ideas put forth by individual residents at San Quentin, by Citizen Advisory Council members, and is reflected in the [People in Blue Report](#).<sup>40</sup>

# Resident needs for rehabilitation

Below we introduce some of the components of rehabilitation that are needed by people who are incarcerated. Each factor holds a different level of importance for each individual as they ready themselves in preparation for re-entering the community.

For San Quentin to be a rehabilitation center for all, equitable access must be provided, prioritizing the needs of those with language barriers, learning differences, disabilities, neurodiversity, and other needs of historically marginalized people.





## ACTION ITEMS

Increase collaboration between Correctional Counselors and the Community Resource Manager team in supporting residents in navigating state-led, CBO-led, and peer-led program offerings.

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Develop a new, robust resident orientation program for new residents of San Quentin in partnership with CBO leaders, currently and formerly incarcerated people, and healthcare and custody staff. The orientation should not be seen as a one-time event; it will last several weeks or months, depending on the necessary accommodations and needs of the new resident. Orientation makes it possible for new residents to begin planning for reentry on Day 1, and to understand their responsibilities and expectations, as well as the supports in place, to truly take part in San Quentin's rehabilitative programming opportunities.

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Create a new tool, a Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan, that is inclusive of healing, healthcare, education, and job training programs which can be personalized and available in different languages. The plan should be inclusive of state-run and CBO-run programs.

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Introduce early career assessments and career training into each resident's Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan.

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Make Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan, orientation resources, and a course catalog available on tablets as a personally accessible reference. Create these materials in partnership with paid peer rehabilitation mentors who are part of the Rehabilitation Team.

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Acknowledge that some individuals are transferred to other facilities prior to completing a program and give residents an opportunity to receive partial credit and/or complete the program via correspondence or through digital access.

Provide customized Transitions courses for each resident returning home. Encourage Division of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP) to offer assessments across key success indicators (housing, job skills, life skills, healthcare needs, healthy eating), to provide customized programs for each resident re-entering the community. For example, people with chronic healthcare needs should be made aware of (and connected with) a healthcare facility where they can obtain care following release, such as a healthcare home in the [Transitions Clinic Network](#). Reentry readiness courses should be led by formerly incarcerated teachers.

## Recommendation 3.2— Create a Rehabilitation Team that acts as a support team for residents

The journey to rehabilitation and reentry requires ongoing support, motivation, and community. Modeled after the healthcare staff's Care Teams, a Rehabilitation Team would offer that consistent support. The team could include a Correctional Counselor, a representative from the Community Resource Manager's team (e.g., AGPA), and a paid rehabilitation peer mentor. Other individuals may join this support team at different points throughout a resident's journey or by resident's choice, for example a healthcare professional, CBO staff, reentry specialist, or a Community Correctional Officer. See [Section 02](#).

### ACTION ITEMS

Establish Rehabilitation Teams for each resident: a core group of 5-6 supportive people that help identify rehabilitative opportunities. This team might include a Correctional Counselor, a representative from the Community Resource Manager team (e.g., AGPA), CBO providers, and a paid peer mentor. Allow for residents to select additional prison-based staff and/or CBO programming staff to invite to be a part of their rehabilitation teams.

# Illustrative examples of a resident's interactions with their Rehabilitation Team

## ORIENTATION

- Resident meets Rehabilitation Team to develop plan
- Rehabilitation and accessibility needs are assessed
- Access given to the Digital Course Catalogue
- Team and resident together map resident's needs, enrolling them in classes, services and programs and placing them on waitlists for popular program offerings
- Resident is given a tour of the facility by peer mentor
- Resident learns about the purpose of the Rehabilitation Team and their personal role in convening the team
- Resident sets up regular check-ins with their peer mentor
- Resident learns about normalization and their personal responsibilities at San Quentin

## ANNUAL CHECK-IN

- Resident receives guidance on new opportunities
- Resident enrolls in new classes or programs
- Team tracks progress across services and courses
- Team discusses place resident in employment or shifting them to a new job
- Resident expresses interest in becoming a Peer Mentor and team brainstorms on opportunities

## LIFE EVENT CHECK-IN (e.g., serious illness of a family member, request for visit in community, completion of a program or degree, interest in joining new program or new need developed)

- Team helps resident enroll in a bereavement or another support group
- Team provides options for job training and placement opportunities
- Resident seeks counseling or SUDT

## PRE-RELEASE PREP

- Team connects resident to resources for parole prep
- Team connects with CRM representative and at reentry center to identify CBOs who can offer housing, healthcare, and job placement services
- Peer mentor assists resident to create a resume
- Resident enrolls in workforce readiness class

## Recommendation 3.3— Help people prepare for parole

More than half of all people incarcerated in California rely on the parole board in some way for their release.<sup>38</sup> The parole board evaluates a person's suitability for release and reentry based on [programming, work assignments, and institutional behavior](#).<sup>39</sup> While CDCR is working on improvements to education and transparency, the parole process is still largely seen as a complex, opaque, and discretionary process by residents.

Preparation for what is expected by the parole board should be an integral part of rehabilitation plans for those who will engage the parole board: education about current parole board policies, how to prepare for this process, panels with recently released people to learn more about board hearings and their experiences, and best practices for preparation. People should also have opportunities to meet directly with external legal services to receive consultations and representation, as needed.

In addition to external legal services, paid trained mentors (both currently and formerly incarcerated persons) could also offer parole preparation and navigation support as well as job and reentry counseling. These mentors could be supported, funded, and managed by a newly defined staff role with expertise in one or more of those areas.

We learned from victim/survivors groups that they, too, would benefit from more education about this process. Similarly, prison staff require education and training on the process to support a resident's parole process through mechanisms like letters of support for parole boards. Victims/survivors should be given opportunities to receive education and “windows in” to the extensive recovery and rehabilitation programming that many people engage in prior to going up for parole.

### ACTION ITEMS

Incorporate parole board preparation into rehabilitation plans.

Expand available parole readiness resources, education, and transparency through Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) and partnerships with CBOs. Identify opportunities to increase information and transparency about decision-making (e.g., better audio technology, transcripts, etc.).

Create a paid peer mentorship role and training program specifically for currently and formerly incarcerated people to support parole preparation in partnership with CBOs.

Offer victims/survivors education on rehabilitative programming and the work that many residents engage in before they go up for parole.

“For many inside, everything they do is in implicit dialogue with the parole board.”

—CBO LEADER





# Case Study

## UnCommon Law - Parole Preparation



[UnCommon Law](#) provides trauma-informed legal representation and consultations to people navigating the parole process. Their staff is led by experts in parole hearing representation and legal advocacy, with a focus on those who have committed serious or violent crimes.

Their team scales these offerings through community education, resources in Spanish and English, consultations, training for attorneys and law students, and through their new peer education pilot: Home After Harm.

With existing support from the City of Oakland, Home After Harm provides a therapeutic community at the yard level. Formerly incarcerated and currently incarcerated people provide counseling and guidance services to peers—a structured curriculum to revisit traumatic histories, develop new self-understanding, be accountable, and adopt coping skills to prepare people to come home.

As discussed in [Recommendation 4.6](#), increasing funding to CBOs like UnCommon Law would ensure San Quentin residents get the support they need to prepare for the parole board process.

## Recommendation 3.4— Establish a Center for Rehabilitation and Reentry Planning

Planning for reentry, assessing progress, and reevaluating programming needs is both a logistical and emotional experience. Residents need a private and accessible space to meet with their Rehabilitation Team for orientation at intake and in an ongoing fashion.

Further, as residents prepare for reentry, they need to access resources in the community: housing, healthcare, employment, plans to reunite with family members, and preparation for parole.

The Division of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP), in partnership with Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO) has started to explore a “one-stop-shop” for reentry support: one space open to all reentry services including consultations with CBOs that provide key services in the community, America's Job Center of California (workforce services provider), and video conferencing with parole officers.

As residents prepare to come home, this space can be used to facilitate warm handoffs between San Quentin providers (mental health, healthcare, educators, workforce training) and community-based providers.

**These services can be combined into one space: a Rehabilitation and Reentry Center**, akin to a career counselor's office at an educational institution. We recommend creating a space for intake, ongoing planning with residents, and ultimately preparation to come back home. This can be implemented in flexible spaces and yards across CDCR.

In terms of staffing, DRP has proposed to repurpose Transitions teachers into reentry specialists that offer customized support and lead programming in the space. Peer mentors and formerly incarcerated people can also staff this space and support residents in connecting to resources.

### ACTION ITEMS

- Advance the DRP and DAPO partnership to establish a rehabilitation and reentry orientation center at a central, physical location on campus for intake, ongoing Rehabilitation Team meetings, and reentry resources.
- Grow or establish relationships with community-based services and organizations (through the Associate Warden of Programs office and DRP) to provide the on-ramp to comprehensive reentry services (e.g., healthcare, mental health, housing, job services, educational services, family reunification) in a variety of counties. Offer these groups a physical or virtual presence at the Rehabilitation and Reentry Center.
- Train staff to grow CBO partnerships, including thoughtful transitional planning and introductions to services in the community
- Utilize this a space for warm handoffs between San Quentin providers and community-based providers of key services: healthcare, mental health, housing, job services, educational services, and more.
- Design the space in the spirit of a school career counseling office: a place of resources and guides for growth. Explore creating a flexible footprint of a center that can be implemented across different CDCR facilities (e.g., a classroom, a center, a modular space).

# 04

## Enable Equitable Access to Programming

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### OBJECTIVE

Give the program operations team increased headcount and digital tools to scale what works, so that every resident who wants to participate in San Quentin's programming can.

### DATA POINT

Almost three quarters of residents (74%) who need to be in a GED program are not currently enrolled.<sup>41</sup>



“As soon as I got access to the programs, that’s what started my change.”

—SAN QUENTIN RESIDENT



# There can't be a waitlist for rehabilitation.

## THE CHALLENGE

San Quentin is widely known for the volume, variety, and high quality of its programming. Programming inside CDCR facilities is typically provided by state employees, third-party contractors, and/or CBO-led organizations. While the institution is primarily responsible for adult basic education and vocational training programs, community based organizations (generally funded primarily through philanthropy) greatly supplement these programs.

Substance use and addiction recovery programs are provided both by contract and by CBO-led programs. Recreational and arts programming are provided both by the state (typically via contract) and by community based organizations. Myriad other activities are provided on an ad hoc basis by CBOs or partner institutions.

This variety offers a unique set of challenges. At present, programs and services operate in silos. CDCR runs state sponsored programs while CBOs generally operate their programs independently from CDCR. **The process for learning about and signing up for programs is opaque, manual, and overwhelming.** There is a lack of adequate program space and difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified instructors and supervisors for state-run programs. New CBO and resident-led programs pop up with little prioritization or quality control.

While the Community Resource Manager's Office is responsible for coordinating the logistics associated with CBO-led programs, it is not equipped to vet programs, either on the basis of demand or of quality. And despite the breadth of programming, supply does not meet demand. Currently, many programs, including state-run GED and substance use disorder programs, have waitlists that prevent people from getting the services they need.

Overall, 38% of people incarcerated at San Quentin do not have a GED or high school diploma; San Quentin ranks 26 of out CDCR's 33 facilities in terms of GED completion. Almost three quarters (74%) of residents who have an assessed need for GED programming are not currently enrolled.<sup>42</sup>

At San Quentin, the expectations around quality and variety of programming is high. When residents aren't able

to access any of that programming—some after working hard to be transferred to the facility—they sometimes feel tricked and frustrated.

As described earlier, the target population mix at San Quentin will remain ~70% determinate sentences, ~30% indeterminate sentences. With this in mind, without the right combination of programming, including shorter-term options, San Quentin may over-index on serving residents with indeterminate and longer sentences while others with shorter sentences, who are on track to be released, may not choose or be able to participate in longer programs.

Programming needs to be available and accessible to all, including those with shorter determinate sentences who will be released back into the community soon. Programming should continue to be gender-affirming and inclusive of those who are LGBTQIA+, and more should be done to understand and meet the needs of those who are neurodiverse.

In addition, 5% of the San Quentin population speaks Spanish as their primary language. There are also 274 people with hearing disabilities.\* Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, if a translator is unavailable to attend a program meeting to support a participating resident with a hearing disability, the entire meeting must be canceled, affecting all program participants. Yet, recruiting and retaining translators and interpreters is difficult.

Access to programs supports rehabilitation and reduces recidivism. An April 2022 report from CDCR's Office of Research and Division of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP) tracked state-run programming completion and reconviction rates for the 36,753 people released during 2018-19 fiscal year. The overall two-year conviction rate was nearly 10% lower for people who completed an educational achievement, CTE or CBI program (24.8%) than those without program completions (34.6%).<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, building a supported pathway to reentry will require CDCR to offer high quality programming, and also revamp program management and operations to bring greater organization, accountability, and access to all programs, including those run by CBOs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Establish an Office of Associate Warden of Programs
- 4.2 Invest in strategies to reduce waitlists
- 4.3 Digitize program operations
- 4.4 Set standards for and continuously evaluate programs for quality assurance
- 4.5 Create a program incubator for residents to pilot and grow needed programs
- 4.6 Proactively meet accessibility needs



*A resident at San Quentin takes a Web Development Fundamentals class from Last Mile. (Photo courtesy of the State of California)*

## Recommendation 4.1— Establish an Office of Associate Warden of Programs

Today, programming decisions and quality are made on an ad-hoc basis, with no clear accountability or oversight. A single Community Resource Manager is charged with decision making and coordination across all community led programs, despite the fact that San Quentin has far more CBO-led programs than other facilities. The role is not part of the institution's leadership team and thus has minimal influence or ability to connect programming to other initiatives.

An Associate Warden position is available at San Quentin. We recommend using it to create an Associate Warden Role that oversees program strategy, evaluation, and implementation. This Associate Warden will have direct access to custody operations and will be able to influence and support decisions that affect programming.

Each Associate Warden has a support staff and office. One person, even if at a senior level, does not have the capacity to lead the variety of activities needed to manage San Quentin's unique program volume.

**This office, led by the Associate Warden of Programs should be responsible for overseeing the program mix, administration, and evaluation, including program changes, expansions, access, and accommodations. It should include being:**

- Hired for interest and experience in effective programming for rehabilitation and successful reentry
- Responsible for auditing and gathering feedback on all programs (state-run and CBO-led)
- In charge of fielding new ideas and connecting residents to others with similar ideas or who are developing similar programming
- Responsible for quality assurance across program and service providers
- A partner to CBOs to identify ways to optimize their experience running programs at San Quentin and to learn about additional CBOs that could offer new programs at San Quentin.

The Office of the Associate Warden of Programs should establish overarching objectives and values to guide the development of programs and services, including policies, procedures, and accountability measures to ensure equitable access. It should also determine which rehabilitation needs each program can meet so that this information can be used to refer people to programs during each resident's Rehabilitation Plan meetings.

**The Office of the Associate Warden of Programs' responsibilities should include the following, also listed as Recommendations 4.2 - 4.7:**

- Invest in quantifying and reducing waitlists including by matching needs to programs based on each person's Rehabilitation Plan
- Digitize program operations and bring transparency to program enrollment
- Create paid peer mentor positions to help people understand and use the program enrollment process
- Set standards for and continuously evaluate programs for quality assurance
- Create a fund and pathway for residents to apply to pilot and grow their own new programs
- Proactively ensure accessibility requirements can be met and offer training to create peer mentors who are able to work as paid ASL and Spanish translators.

Additional responsibilities include partnership with DRP to fund and create a pathway for CBOs to pilot and grow new programs through the Innovative Grants Program. [See Recommendation 10.2.](#)

## ACTION ITEMS

Establish the Office of Associate Warden of Programs responsible for quality and administration of effective, rehabilitative programming.

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To increase coordination and quality assurance across state-run, CBO-run, and volunteer-run programs, organize Community Resource Managers to report into the Associate Warden of Programs.

*(See [Recommendation 3.1](#) on increased coordination between Community Resource Managers and Correctional Counselors)*

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Associate Wardens routinely swap positions as part of career development. This position should be filled by a candidate who can bring stability to operations.
- The prison can realign resources from the maximum security Associate Warden position that is being eliminated with the dissolution of East Block.



## Recommendation 4.2— Invest in strategies to reduce waitlists

The challenge of waitlists extends well beyond ISUDT and GED programs (as outlined in [Recommendation 1.4](#)). Program volume and capacity at San Quentin are limited by resources—staff, funding, and physical space.

In order to meaningfully reduce waitlists, San Quentin needs to proactively address each of those barriers—recruiting and retaining staff, expanding funding sources, and optimizing space usage.

Waitlists to participate in programs can be particularly devastating to residents given San Quentin’s reputation for exceptional programming.

In order to meet the demand, residents need physical space to engage in remote learning opportunities as another means to attaining the education and support they need.

### ACTION ITEMS

Audit existing programming spaces across campus and the spatial needs of different programs, identify where spaces can be used more flexibly, and expand space available for programming, within and beyond Building 38. As a result of robust program quality assurance (see [Recommendation 4.4](#)), The Office of Associate Warden of Programs must ensure high quality programs have access to space. Reduce program duplication in favor of bringing in new programming that meets an unmet need where necessary.

Offer “rapid response programming” for the shorter-term population (e.g., sentence of 2 years or less, sudden sentence reduction during incarceration) to allow all residents to meet programming needs for reentry, no matter the length of their stay. This could include encouraging CBOs to create shorter program options for a select group of individuals or offering new programs of shorter length.

*Example:* Expand short-term programs like Career and Technical Education (CTE) Laborer Program, which launched at Pelican Bay, that offers an 8 week entry-level construction job training option with Cognitive Behavioral Interventions (CBI).

Allow remote educational opportunities and training, decreasing barriers to recruiting trainers, increasing consistency of training for residents, and expanding available programming.

See additional action items for reducing waitlists in [Recommendation 1.4](#).

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Remote learning opportunities require high speed wifi connectivity and may require updated technology access. See additional action items for improving access to technology in [Recommendation 4.3](#).
- Remote learning opportunities are not suitable for all types of programming, and residents may prefer programming that is conducted in person
- Third-watch staff need to be trained to facilitate programming and have the time and/or incentives necessary to partake in the training

## Recommendation 4.3— Digitize program operations

We recommend creating a secure digital platform for residents and program providers to access and manage all of their programming needs at San Quentin to enable institutional efficiency.

For a care team model and expanded CBO partnerships to work well, there needs to be a clearer way of sharing data and information across stakeholders to support coordination.

Specifically, a digital course catalog, accessible in multiple languages that clearly states program requirements and which needs from a Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan each course meets, is an essential tool for Correctional Counselors, Community Correctional Officers, peer mentors, and residents to make programming decisions together. *See Recommendations 3.1 and 3.2.*

Ideally, the platform can also make the waitlist and estimated time of enrollment for each program transparent and allow residents to sign up, check availability, and enroll in programs on their own. Also, the resident can use the platform to alert their Rehabilitation Team to help petition for access if they are unable to get into a course or have an unmet need on their Rehabilitation Plan, particularly if their release is imminent.

### ACTION ITEMS

Make information about all programs, goals, eligibility, length, and evidence, available in a digital course catalog on tablets.

Explore a partnership between the Statewide IT department, tablet software vendor, and the Office of Associate Warden of Programs to license software for course management and enrollment (akin to a university enrollment system.) Train residents to use any new technology introduced.

Ensure high speed wifi connectivity across the San Quentin campus.

Evaluate CDCR policies that enable adoption of new technology and operating systems — internally, for residents, and CBOs. Identify opportunities to increase access and utilize latest technology for program operations, as appropriate.



As of May 2023, all San Quentin residents have a tablet to help them keep in touch with loved ones, as part of a larger program across California by CDCR.

## Recommendation 4.4— Set standards for and continuously evaluate programs for quality assurance

San Quentin also needs to focus on evaluating the quality of its programs to ensure it is delivering the best rehabilitative opportunities. That means having the right mix of programs available—including short- and long-term personal, educational, and professional development pathways. It also requires assessing quality by conducting regular surveys of residents and former residents, determining positive outcomes, equitable access, and uncovering any instances of inadvertent harm.

To do this, the new Office of Associate Warden of Programs needs to create systems for continual oversight and quality control. This may include partnering with outside organizations to help with program assessment.

Programs should be vetted and meet certain requirements from an external evaluation body before being adopted as an official CDCR program. With CDCR's new focus on Trauma-Informed Care, it should ensure that programs focused on addressing a history of trauma or other serious mental health needs are vetted by healthcare professionals to ensure quality and that they are not inadvertently traumatogenic. (See [Recommendation 5.2](#) for more).

The new program review process should examine each proposed program's purpose, intended participants, eligibility criteria, content/curriculum, length and frequency, skills and qualifications of service providers, the rehabilitation needs it would meet, and the enrollment process. All programs should be evaluated at regular intervals (e.g., annually) for continual quality assessment and opportunities for program leaders to optimize their programs in response to evaluations and feedback.



A San Quentin resident flips through books at the facility's library.  
(Photo courtesy of the State of California)

## ACTION ITEMS

Develop systems to regularly assess the program needs of the population as a whole, and whether those needs are being met, including 360 degree feedback from residents and staff about existing programs and/or unmet needs.

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Evaluate existing programs on a regular (likely annual) basis through direct observation, program evaluation by participants, and quantitative reporting on participation. This should also include clarity on which rehabilitation needs each program is meeting (programs can meet more than one need.)

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The Office of Associate Warden of Programs must analyze specific obstacles to the availability of sufficient quality programs of the appropriate kinds, devising strategies (in partnership with the resident population) to address these.

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Establish a set of criteria and a process to select new programs that have demonstrated success (evidence-based, case study based). Should include which rehabilitative need(s) each meets.

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Set up ongoing independent evaluations with a third-party administrator (e.g., university, foundation, CBO) to review program effectiveness, sustainability, and success rates over time. Measure programming success beyond recidivism.

- Post-release metrics could include community reintegration, access to employment, access to housing, access to education, family reunification, improved health/wellbeing, etc.
- Pre-release metrics could include program participation, completion and progression, engagement in new programming, health/wellbeing, positive family visits, etc.

Empower the CRM to determine which CBO-led programs should be eligible for meeting which needs on the rehabilitation plan, and to create criteria to generate additional incentives for participation in certain, high quality CBO-led programs.



## Recommendation 4.5— Create a program incubator for residents to pilot and grow needed programs

Some of the most popular and successful programs are homegrown from within San Quentin, for residents, by residents. Residents would benefit from a program incubator to support the design of new programs, measure their outcomes, and grow them as they succeed. This can be run by the office of the Associate Warden of Programs, to help programs be evidence-based and help them scale sustainably.

As a particular program scales with success, efforts should be made to increase resident ownership and recognition for that program.

### ACTION ITEMS

Create a formalized process to connect residents with CBOs, colleges, or other organizations to identify and current and emerging gaps at San Quentin and to develop new programs to address these unmet needs.

Offer guided support and technical assistance to design, fund, evaluate new curricula, set up scheduling, and connect with CBO partner facilitators or staff sponsors.

# Case Study

## Light Keepers



Light Keepers (originally called “Brother’s Keepers”) is one example of an impactful program that was started by people during their incarceration at San Quentin.

In 2005, residents at San Quentin came together to start peer support and a crisis-trained suicide prevention team called Brother’s Keepers after they lost a friend to suicide. They were peer responders, trained and available to help support their peers in a crisis or contemplating suicide. In 2021, the group started working closely with San Quentin’s mental health services, and the peer responders changed their name to Light Keepers to be more inclusive. Now the Suicide Prevention Coordinator leads the program along with two outside CBO-employed staff or volunteers.

The peer responders go through a rigorous application process, where they are referred, interviewed and vetted by the current Light Keepers and staff.

The Light Keepers receive a year of training and they commit to working in the program for at least one year, but most stay with it for many years, or until they are released. Custody can request any of the Light Keepers if they believe that an incarcerated person may benefit from peer mentoring/peer support, and Light Keepers are allowed to enter housing units that are not their own to provide this support. The Light Keepers also provide support after a death, suicide, or serious self-harm in a housing unit, as part of the post-intervention plan. Mental healthcare professionals are the primary responders in the community after a death by suicide; and Light Keepers can be an additional source of support for the community. They also wear a Light Keeper pin so that the community can identify them.

There is a lot of stigma and misinformation among residents when it comes to what mental health treatment entails. The Light Keepers educate others on what mental health treatment actually is, they also conduct office hours and hand out materials at orientation. They are able to connect with and support those who may be unable or unwilling to receive mental health service due to their culture, beliefs, or gang affiliation. They help residents prepare for the parole board and enroll in programs to support their rehabilitation. Even after they leave San Quentin, some Light Keepers come back to help with trainings of future peer responders.

## Recommendation 4.6— Proactively meet accessibility needs

The San Quentin population includes a diverse set of individuals with a diverse set of needs. Accessibility barriers may prevent residents from accessing the programming they need and/or result in miscommunication with staff, program leaders, and other residents.

Specifically, autism and neurodiversity were raised as underserved needs which are less well understood by programming staff and leaders. CDCR will need to understand the impact and scale of these need by partnering with medical experts, behavioral health professionals, education experts, and public health professionals. Findings will likely point to a need for

additional prison staff and CBO-led program staff training and accessibility considerations.

Continue to provide gender-responsive and gender-affirming, as well as LGBTQIA+ inclusive programming (already provided at San Quentin because of federal and state requirements).

If the myriad programs and services available are not made more accessible, they will not deliver on their promise to support reentry for enough of the population to meaningfully improve public safety.

### ACTION ITEMS

Recruit more translators and interpreters and American Sign Language interpreters. Offer training to staff and residents to become paid interpreters or translators in Spanish and American Sign Language.

Explore the need for a broader range of neurodiversity and accessibility needs, including for people on the “autism spectrum.” Assemble expert panels (e.g., medical professionals, educators, etc.) to determine scope of services that are needed.

Implement technological solutions for translation or transcription such as closed caption systems for program services, curriculum, and discussions.

Empower residents to communicate about their learning differences and best ways they learn to their program leaders, teachers, and peer mentors.

Employ instructors or learning specialists with expertise in learning differences. Include accessibility standards and accountability measures in the values and policies of the Office of the Associate Warden of Programs.

Train staff to better understand learning differences and neurodiversity and their impact on communication and social interactions to prevent misinterpretation leading to undue rule violation charges.

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The Program Team must proactively measure demographics and assess new needs over time, including changes in accessibility needs.
- As any part of the San Quentin model scales to other CDCR facilities, accessibility considerations for the new population must rigorously be considered to provide equitable, gender-responsive, and culturally competent programs and services.

# 05

## Create the Conditions for Healing and Making Amends

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### OBJECTIVE

Interrupt cycles of continued harm by supporting residents' ability to heal and make amends.

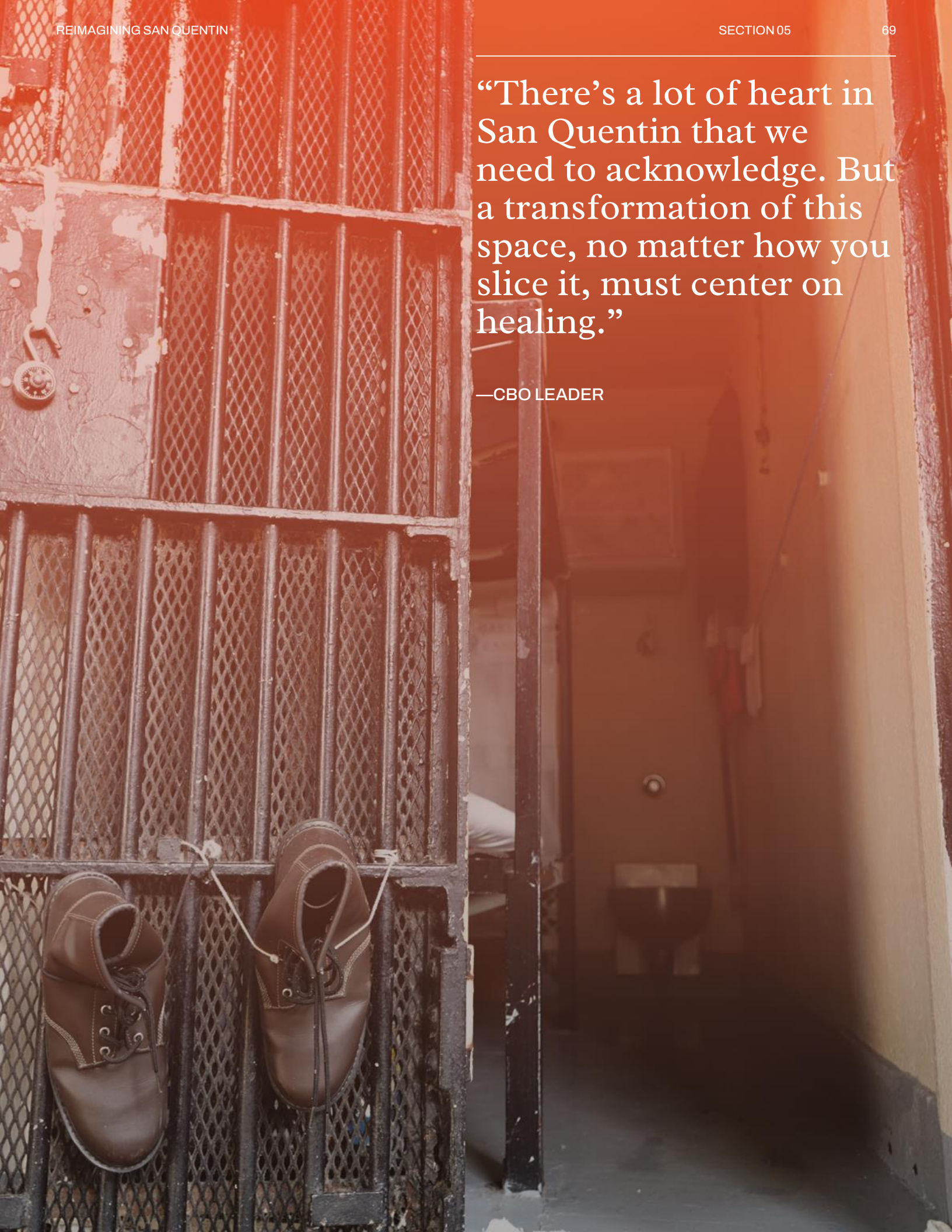
### DATA POINT

By a [margin of 3 to 1](#),<sup>44</sup> victims/survivors prefer holding people accountable through options beyond just prison, such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment, drug treatment, community supervision, or community service.



“There’s a lot of heart in San Quentin that we need to acknowledge. But a transformation of this space, no matter how you slice it, must center on healing.”

—CBO LEADER



# Rehabilitation starts with personal healing and making amends.

## THE CHALLENGE

A critical component of the rehabilitation process is engaging in healing from trauma, addressing mental health needs, acknowledging harm that has been done, and making amends with victims/survivors and communities.

In prison, the stigma of seeking mental health care and substance use disorder treatment runs deep. Some people are disincentivized to seek out mental health care or substance use treatment for fear of it adversely affecting their reputation and eligibility for programming or parole.

There is a significant body of research that demonstrates an association between exposure to trauma and contact with the criminal justice system, particularly in the context of chronic victimization and trauma.<sup>45 46 47</sup> A 2014 study of 592 people incarcerated in a single high security prison found that [virtually all participants \(99%\) reported experience at least one traumatic event related to violence, injury, or shock](#).<sup>47</sup> 71% reported childhood trauma. Rates of current PTSD symptoms and lifetime PTSD were significantly higher (30 to 60%) than rates found in the general male populations (3 to 6%).<sup>47</sup>

**Many people who are incarcerated have been victims/survivors themselves.** Experiences during incarceration (e.g., witnessing or experiencing violence, psychological harm) [can further contribute to traumatization and PTSD](#).<sup>49</sup>

Individual and group therapeutic services offered by CBOs and state-run programs like in communities) aim to support people in addressing and healing these traumas to reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, PTSD while increasing skills of emotional regulation, empathy, and social connection.

Beyond state-mandated programs (see [Recommendation 1.4](#)), CBO-led individual and group healing programs are essential to rehabilitation, but are not universally accessible due to limited space and staffing. The quality of these healing programs also varies. Some of the mental health services are reportedly led by community-based

staff that are not mental healthcare professionals. It is not clear whether CBO-led trauma-informed, mental health programs focused on treatment are being vetted by mental health care professionals from CDCR or elsewhere, or if there is a system for CBO-led program staff to communicate to mental healthcare professionals in the prison about any mental healthcare needs expressed to them by residents.

Alongside programs for healing experiences of past trauma, programs that address interpersonal harm and accountability provide avenues to make amends and aid in personal transformation. Restorative justice programs are in demand among residents, but they are infrequent, one-off, and not coordinated. There is appetite to identify appropriate, expanded options for restorative justice programs within the facility.

Moreover, victim/survivor community-based organizations told us that they face funding shortfalls, resulting in fewer services for people who have experienced harm in the community and fewer opportunities to extend supportive, restorative justice programming to those who would be amenable. The Governor signed a budget in 2022 that raised the cap for [victims of violent crime to receive up to \\$70,000](#)<sup>50</sup> from the state to reimburse for a number of related expenses, including mental health care, medical expenses, and funeral expenses, but more is needed to ensure the viability and longer-term sustainability of programs offering victim/survivor support.

Although CDCR does not set requirements for restitution — it is a decision that is pursuant to state law and determined by a court — a revised restitution policy should be created. Any restitution process redesign should improve the ability to fulfill the restitution commitment for victims earlier, and in-full but also protect against extreme financial hardship upon release. The repayment of restitution could be addressed by a fair wage for work in prison and should be considered by the proposed Workforce Advisory Board (see [Recommendation 10.6](#)).



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Expand awareness, access, and participation in mental health services and substance use disorder treatment
- 5.2 Expand programs, spaces, and opportunities for residents to engage in rehabilitative healing
- 5.3 Coordinate and expand restorative justice programs and victim/survivor services
- 5.4 Support current and new programs specifically for victims/survivors
- 5.5 Change policies so incarcerated people can pay restitution and leave prison with less debt



## Recommendation 5.1— Expand awareness, access, and participation in mental health services

People need access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment services as foundations for engaging in rehabilitation. See [Recommendation 1.4](#) for more about needed services.

Incarcerated people need to know about the services available and support to overcome barriers of stigma to participate. CDCR and partnering CBOs must proactively build awareness of services and work to normalize use of mental health and substance use treatment services as an expected part of the successful journey to rehabilitation and reentry. Further, residents need assurance from CDCR and the parole board to ensure mental health treatment is not stigmatized or result in biased reviews for eligibility for programs or in the parole process.

Note: It is outside of the scope of this Advisory Council's expertise to weigh in too deeply on the adequacy of available mental health services as experts are engaged in decades of ongoing litigation addressing these issues in California. Instead, the Advisory Council has opted to highlight some overarching concerns that have emerged over the course of our interviews, as important areas of consideration, if not already addressed by CDCR, the plaintiffs, and the Governor's Office.

### ACTION ITEMS

Require all prison staff who work with the incarcerated population to participate in annual training on trauma-informed care.

Recognize and reward people for seeking out mental healthcare services: in orientation, in Rehabilitation and Reentry planning, and reinforce with staff in training. Define use of mental healthcare and substance use disorder treatment as demonstrating engagement in the rehabilitation process.

Establish a role for a mental healthcare professional to vet and approve all CBO mental health programs delivered in prison to ensure that none are causing inadvertent harm or being designed or run without the responsible supervision of a mental healthcare professional.

### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board of Parole Hearing (BPH) has an opportunity to increase information regarding how receiving and benefiting from mental health treatment affects parole deliberations and the parole process. See [Recommendation 3.3](#) for more on preparing residents for the parole process.



## Recommendation 5.2— Expand programs, spaces, and opportunities for residents to engage in rehabilitative healing

Healing, making amends, and restoring relationships is hard to do in any context. It is particularly difficult to do this in the harsh prison environment.

Residents should be encouraged and have the opportunity to engage in therapeutic programming in order to be able to address trauma that they have experienced prior to and during their incarceration. Use of these resources should be available to and encouraged for residents throughout their incarceration without any negative connotations being attached to it. Trauma-informed mental health services should also be vetted and reviewed by mental health professionals to ensure quality, mitigate harm, and provide on-ramps as needed to healthcare staff.

While not mandatory, there are already a variety of existing CBO-led healing programs widely considered to be of high-quality that support healing for people who are incarcerated, such as GRIP, VOEG, Voices Heal, ALIGHT Justice, No More Tears, Insight Prison Project, and LGBTQIA+ groups, among many others.

**Transformative In-Prison Workgroup (TPW)** is a statewide coalition of at least 50 CBOs offering in-prison rehabilitative programming and is an important resource for linking San Quentin leadership and residents to additional CBO-led programming opportunities.

Access to restorative, healing-focused programs including arts and recreational programs that foster self-expression and confidence (e.g. theater, filmmaking, yoga, running, etc.) can be transformative to participants. Those that have an outward-facing component (films, journalism, etc) can also show the broader public what is possible in terms of rehabilitation. Certain programs can be expanded to allow participation for loved ones (e.g., a therapeutic arts activities for parents and their children during visits).

These programs need dedicated spaces across the campus that are appropriate for — and easy to access for — families and other visitors, beyond and including the Building 38 project. *See [Section 11](#).*

Rehabilitation and healing must be a core principle in any spatial redesign of the facility. Spaces used specifically for healing require considerations for accessibility, privacy, access to nature, and decor and furnishings that are more reflective of a home or community, rather than a prison.



San Quentin residents take part in a CBO-led yoga program.

## ACTION ITEMS

Each resident's Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan (discussed in [Section 3](#)) should include options for individual and group healing programming.

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Through the Office of the Associate Warden of Programs, ensure visibility and access to high-quality therapeutic programs. Create clarity around waitlists for residents and explore on-ramps into popular programs (e.g., introductory courses, workshops, etc.) Partner with TPW to expand new programming and to assess, build and reinforce CBO-facility partnership infrastructure at San Quentin (and throughout CDCR.)

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Identify spaces across the campus (including and beyond Building 38) that are appropriate for different formats of individual healing and restorative group programming. Offer modular design options within these spaces to enable them to different types of programs.

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Increase opportunities and funding pathways for residents to pilot and establish programs (see [Recommendation 4.5](#)) and infrastructure for CBOs to efficiently receive funding to support the programs developed or envisioned by people who are incarcerated (see [Recommendation 10.2](#)).

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To ensure quality assurance and mitigate harm, The Office of Associate Warden of Programs should ensure any programs that offer trauma-informed, mental health services are vetted by healthcare professionals. See [Recommendation 4.4](#) for more on quality assurance.



Residents at San Quentin participate in the ROOTS (Restoring our Original True Selves) program.

## Recommendation 5.3— Coordinate and expand restorative justice programs and victim/survivor services

As San Quentin becomes a rehabilitation center, people who have committed crimes that have harmed others need varied resources to explore the impact of their actions on victims/survivors and to make amends for the harm done. This is critical to recovery, growth and future community safety.

Partnerships with CBOs and community groups can optimize restorative justice programs and practices that are vetted as appropriate for an in-prison context. Many models of restorative justice require people who have engaged in interpersonal conflict to live in the community as they heal and demonstrate accountability; in contrast, incarceration and separation from society often do not provide an environment conducive to these practices.

Appropriate, in-prison models of restorative justice programming should continue to take place within San Quentin through partnerships with CBOs. These programs can support residents in understanding the impact of harm done, understanding root causes of harmful behavior, understanding experiences as victims/survivors themselves, and learning strategies for restorative conflict mediation and durable, healthy relationships.

These CBO partners should receive support to share the outcomes of their restorative justice programs with the broader public to create buy-in, participation, and investment in ongoing restorative dialogues as effective methods to support victims/survivors, create transformational accountability, interrupt cycles and crime, and increase public safety.

Restorative justice programs also deserve spaces that allow distance from concurrent resident programming to enable privacy. Spaces used for restorative justice should have a healing environment that is conducive for people who are incarcerated to meet with victims/survivors, including configurations for different sized groups, as well as separate space for victims/survivors to receive support. A variety of flexible spaces on campus, with minor but intentional improvements, could be used for different types of restorative justice purposes. Such spaces should be designed in concert with victims/survivors of crime.



## ACTION ITEMS

Partner with CBO providers and victim/survivor groups to identify what services are needed and appropriate within a prison context versus what is more appropriate in a community setting.

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Explore more stable and sustained funding sources for restorative justice programming and public engagement rather than the current system of offering one-off annual grants as these grants make sustainable growth difficult for CBOs. *See [Recommendation 10.3](#) for CBO funding infrastructure.*

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Contract restorative justice programs through CBOs in coordination with the Division Of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP), Office of Victim and Survivor Rights and Services, and Associate Warden of Programs.

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Explore developing restorative practices to resolve some resident and prison staff conflicts. An example of this approach can be seen in [The Restoring Promise Initiative](#) run by the Vera Institute of Justice.

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Make more areas across campus appropriate for restorative justice programming, with consideration for public accessibility. Victim/survivor groups that are engaged in restorative and transformative justice practices should be key consultants on the design of the new restorative programming spaces.

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Provide CBO partners with resources and technical assistance to engage victims/survivors and the public about restorative justice options and their efficacy.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Residents and CBOs need more information on how participation in restorative justice programs impacts parole processes and/or impact on sentences.
- CBOs need support to build buy-in for restorative justice models (both in-prison and in-community).
- Evidence-based, in-community models can effectively support prison population reduction if offered as diversion from incarceration, scaled in partnership with state and local entities (e.g., DA offices, police departments, etc.)



## Recommendation 5.4— Support current and new programs specifically for victims/survivors

The Alliance for Safety and Justice Crime Survivors Speak report found that [by a margin of 3 to 1](#),<sup>51</sup> victims prefer holding people accountable through options beyond just prison, such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment, substance use programming, restorative justice, or community service. San Quentin could offer a greater volume and variety of experiences for victims/survivors to build an understanding of the people who have committed crimes and transparency into their plan to rehabilitation. Further, this visibility can provide support for rehabilitative programming not just within prison walls but in communities.

**The report also found that only 1 in 4 victims/survivors found the justice system helpful in providing information about recovering from crime or referrals for support services.** There are also opportunities for an exchange of ideas between leadership of CBOs that run restorative justice programs, victims/survivors programs, and reentry programs to expand resources and services for victims/survivors.

**Victim/survivor groups told members of our Advisory Council that funding shortfalls have resulted in several barriers to providing services needed by people who have experienced harm in the community** and fewer opportunities to extend supportive programming to those who would be amenable.

Victim/survivor groups report needing more agency to curate the types of healing or restorative experiences they want and need. Although many victims/survivors prefer to receive services from small community-based organizations, budget cuts to the federal Department of Justice Victims of Crime Acts (VOCA) funds have created challenges and competition for these funds for smaller organizations.

### ACTION ITEMS

Bring together CBOs providing services to victims/survivors to determine demand for different types of programs and supportive services for victims.

Create new in-prison restorative justice programs in partnership with CBOs and victims/survivors to meet their needs, including victims/survivors of unsolved crimes.

Leverage the CBO partnerships to support restorative justice in communities through credible messengers.

Create two different Victims of Crime Acts grant funding mechanisms—one for smaller service providers and another for larger service providers to reduce competition between smaller and larger programs that have different abilities to compete.

Facilitate statewide collaboration meetings between leading CBOs facilitating reentry and CBOs providing support to victims/survivors to connect existing programming and build new engagement opportunities together.

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Each victim/survivor experience is unique, and requires different types of restorative justice experiences.

## Recommendation 5.5— Change policies so incarcerated people can pay restitution and leave prison with less debt

When people leave California State prison, they have an average of \$7,736 in restitution debt. Residents released to parole supervision at San Quentin have an average of \$2,763 in restitution debt.<sup>52</sup>

Although CDCR does not set requirements for restitution — it is a decision that is pursuant to state law and determined by a court — every person who is sentenced to state prison is ordered to pay a restitution fine [between \\$300 \(minimum\) and \\$10,000 \(maximum\)](#).<sup>53</sup>

Any restitution process redesign should improve the ability to fulfill the restitution commitment for victims earlier, and in-full. The repayment of restitution could be addressed by a fair wage for work in prison (*see Recommendation 7.2*). Also, vendors could be required to provide more comparable prices (to the outside market) for goods inside prison which have a markup (e.g., online songs and movies.) Less debt upon release would provide more stability when returning to the community.

Though CDCR has expanded education about restitution — primarily through video content and in a handbook — a lot of confusion remains. Residents often don't know the difference between a fine, which reflects the cost of a trial, and a victim direct order, which requires a victim/survivor to provide receipts as proof of damages. Few incarcerated people are aware they can self-declare their social security numbers to earn interest on their trust account balance while in custody. Also, for any funds deposited into an incarcerated people's trust account, [50% is directed towards the court-ordered restitution](#).<sup>54</sup> Due to 2021 Assembly Bill 177, the laws for criminal administrative fees were changed. Effective January 2022, CDCR no longer collects an administrative fee.

Education about restitution should be taught by the Rehabilitation Team during orientation (*see Recommendation 3.2*) and additional courses should be offered by peer mentors.

### ACTION ITEMS

Include education on the restitution process during orientation and throughout incarceration.

Establish a tablet-accessible banking information which clearly shows residents their remaining restitution balance and account activities.

Ensure incarcerated people have access to their own court documents and ability to track wage deposits through their personal tablets.

Allow victims/survivors to have a broader scope of options to request for making amends (outside of financial repayment) and agency over what repair looks like. This could include mediation, required programming, or other measures. *See Recommendations 5.3 and 5.4.*

The judiciary or legislature should consider changing policies for fines (not including victim direct order restitutions, which are based on out-of-pocket losses) to make it possible for residents to earn credit (early release or financial credit) for their participation in programming or peer mentorship.

# 06

## Strengthen Connections with Family and Community

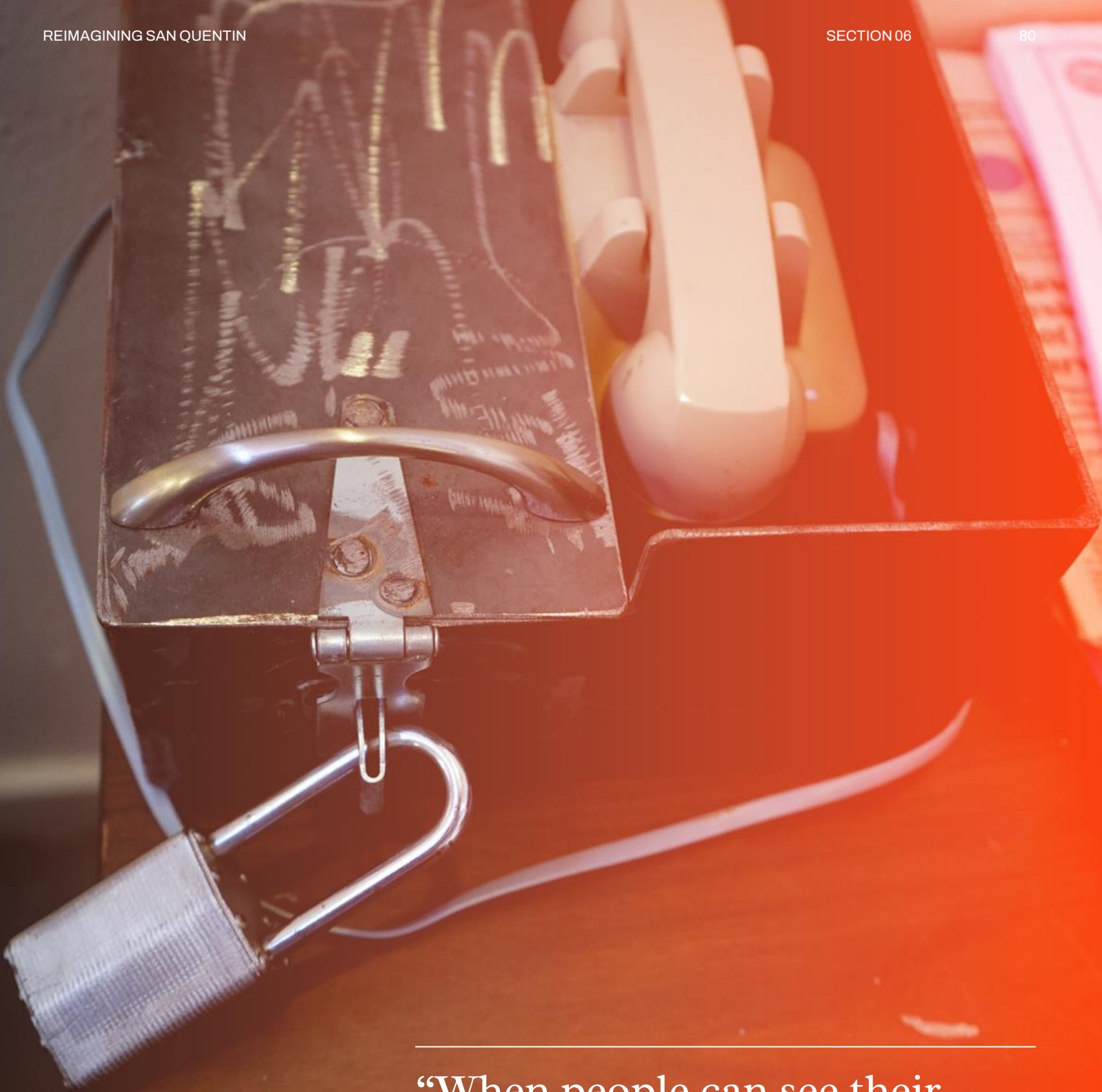
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### OBJECTIVE

Create the conditions whereby residents can build and maintain relationships with their loved ones.

### DATA POINT

[1 in 2 U.S. adults](#) have experienced the incarceration of an immediate family member,<sup>54</sup> and nearly 200,000 California children have a parent in state prison.<sup>56</sup>



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“When people can see their families, it reduces violence, they participate more in programming, they’re more motivated. It’s important for rehabilitation.”

—SAN QUENTIN RESIDENT



# Relationships are key to rehabilitation.

## THE CHALLENGE

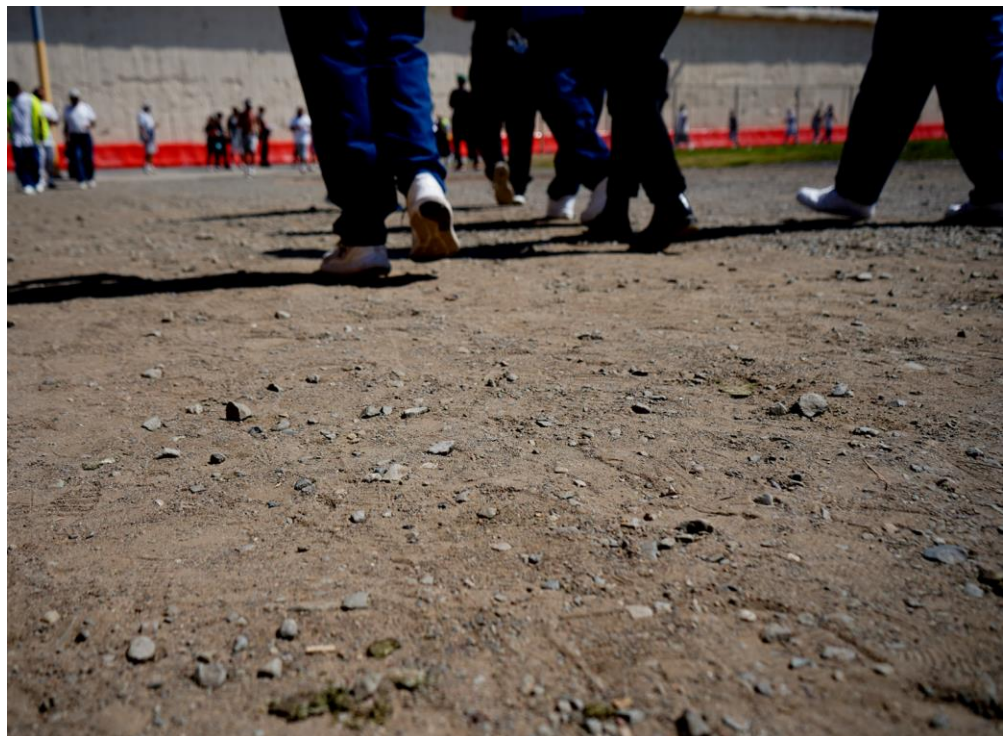
Maintaining relationships with family, friends, and community members plays a pivotal role in reducing recidivism, supporting personal transformation, and enhancing opportunities for successful reintegration into society. Further, families that have lost a loved one to incarceration need meaningful opportunities to stay connected; children with parents who are incarcerated experience [profound negative impacts](#)<sup>57</sup> on their health and wellbeing due to the separation.

Research [strongly supports](#)<sup>58</sup> the positive impact of maintaining family contact for both incarcerated individuals and their families. For example, researchers found that among 7,000 people released from state prisons in Florida, each additional visit received during incarceration lowered the odds of two-year recidivism by nearly four percent.<sup>59</sup>

For these reasons, the “Keep Families Close Bill” (AB 1226), which requires placing residents in institutions near their children, is a good start. CDCR has notably invested in free phone calls and video communications through SB 1008, but digital interactions are just a first step to rebuild relationships and establish the support system needed for successful reentry.

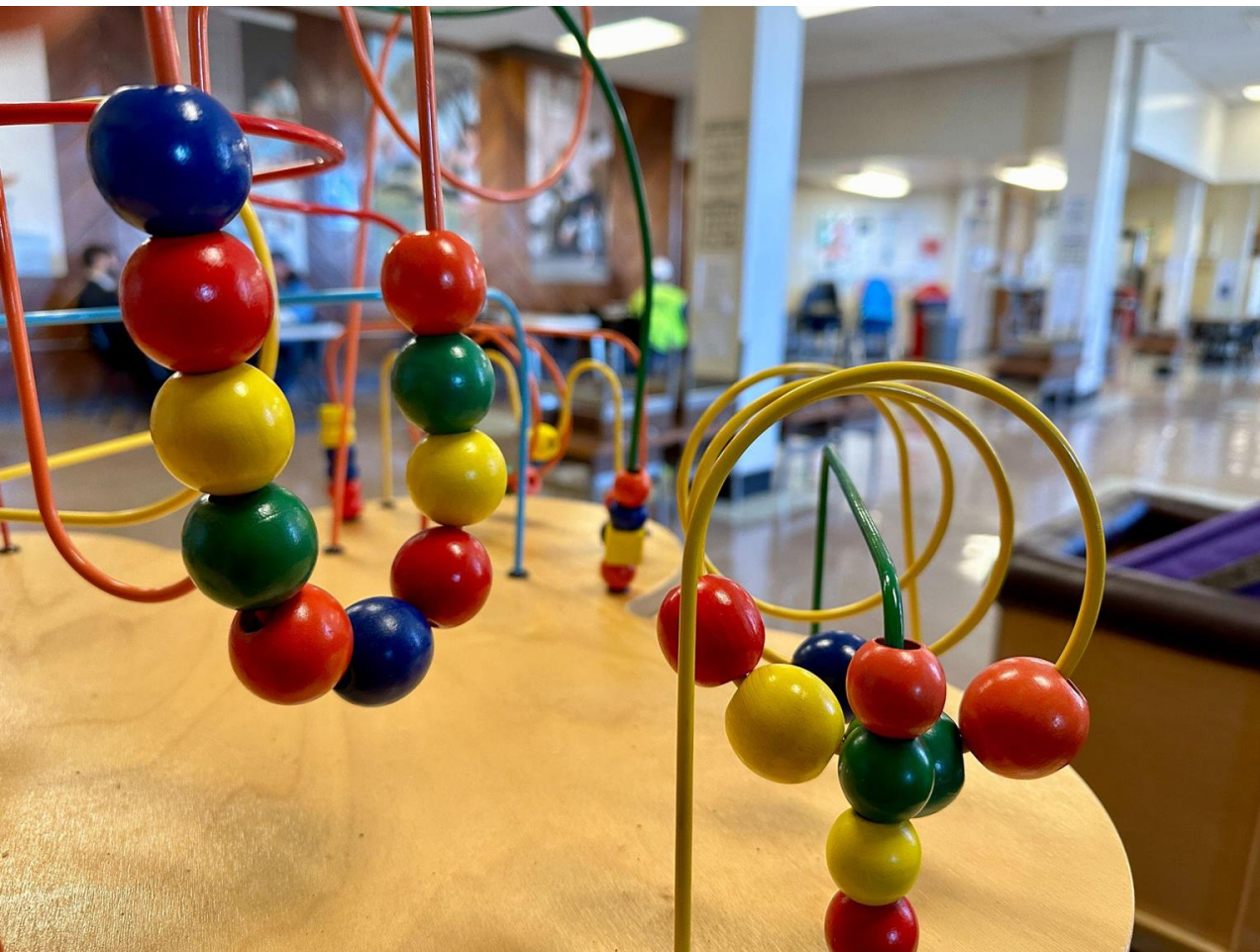
There are a variety of visitation resources designed to reduce costs for families, such as free transportation, accommodations offered by CBOs, and childcare, but there is reportedly not enough awareness or use of those resources.

The current visitation spaces are institutionalized, cold places that can be scary for children and even for adults. They are sterile, with little privacy. There are limited extended family visit units, with a four-month waitlist.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Expand programming to connect residents with their families
- 6.2 Modify policies and services to make family connections easier, more frequent, and more meaningful
- 6.3 Engage residents in the design and building of a new visitation space



This is the current in-person visitation area at San Quentin. (Photo courtesy of the State of California)

## Recommendation 6.1— Expand programming to connect residents with their families

Engaging families and loved ones throughout incarceration should be the norm. The “Keep Families Close Bill” (AB 1226) is a good start, but there exists limited programming for family members to prepare for the return of their loved one, particularly for children.

### ACTION ITEMS

Instill a whole family approach when instituting programs, policies, and services that engage families.

*Example:* Invisible Walls Wales, an innovative program in the UK, tested a whole family approach to visits, offering intense support to residents and their partners (or other caregivers) and children for a period of 6–12 months during the custodial part of the father’s sentence and up to six months post release.

Overall, 63% exited the program in employment or training, compared to 20% being employed before entering prison. Moreover, 20% were assessed on exit as actively misusing drugs and/or alcohol, compared with 89% prior to custody. And partners and children reported developing deeper relationships with their incarcerated loved ones.

Expand opportunities for residents with upcoming release dates (e.g., 6 months) to visit for important family milestones (e.g., graduation, funeral, etc.) *See [Recommendation 1.3](#) on normalization for more.*

Partner with the Office of the Associate Warden of Programs to offer family reunification activities during visitation, including age-appropriate opportunities for children (e.g., therapeutic arts activities, cakes cooked by San Quentin bakers for family birthdays.)

Expand partnerships with CBOs that serve families enduring incarceration to offer trauma-informed orientation classes for adults and children at intake, prior to the visiting experience, and throughout a loved one’s journey from incarceration to reentry.

*Example:* [Camp Grace](#) is a five-day music and arts summer program facilitated in partnership between Place4Grace and CDCR. Children ages 8–14 spend extended bonding time with their parents who are incarcerated. Daily activities include music, art, and healing activities. Children and incarcerated parents build connections and community with other families enduring separation during incarceration.

Make it possible for those who are incarcerated to join their families virtually, for both big events (parent-teacher conferences, school performances, life events) and daily moments (doing homework with their children, reading books to their kids.)

*Example:* Throughout the country, incarcerated people [are distance-reading bedtime stories](#) to their children, creating daily moments of connection.

## Recommendation 6.2— Modify policies and services to make family visits easier, more frequent, and more meaningful

Currently, family visits are difficult to schedule and often require significant travel time and costs, for an experience that is uncomfortable for both visitors and people who are incarcerated. Ideally, a visit should feel reminiscent of home—full of conversation, nourishing food, and allow for a sense of intimacy.

To improve family connection and visits, CDCR has an opportunity to better understand and identify barriers to the current experience.

Across CDCR, there are often local resources that assist families in reunification that families may not be aware of. CDCR can partner with CBOs to identify barriers to visits and increasing awareness of services available.

### ACTION ITEMS

Evaluate visit policies and design decisions that have historically prioritized violation prevention. Explore opportunities to promote and increase normalization during family visits.

Evaluate policies, contracts, and costs associated with gift and food vendors to expand food and gift options. For gifts, build on the Department's exploration with online retailers. For food, offer options for snack bar, local vendors including farmer's markets, and partnerships with San Quentin Cooks.

Identify barriers and improve the appointment scheduling system to ease the logistic burden on loved ones of planning trips.

Expand and build awareness for visit resources like transit vouchers, transportation support, lodging vouchers, and policy guidelines for families to increase access and preparation. Integrate this information into the orientation to San Quentin.

Conduct annual qualitative and quantitative assessments around the family connection and visitation experience to better align services with the needs of families and loved ones. Identify barriers that are limiting family connection and corresponding solutions and communications, in partnership with CBOs.

Ensure visitation correctional officers understand the family reunification process. *See [Recommendation 2.1](#) for more on training for staff.*



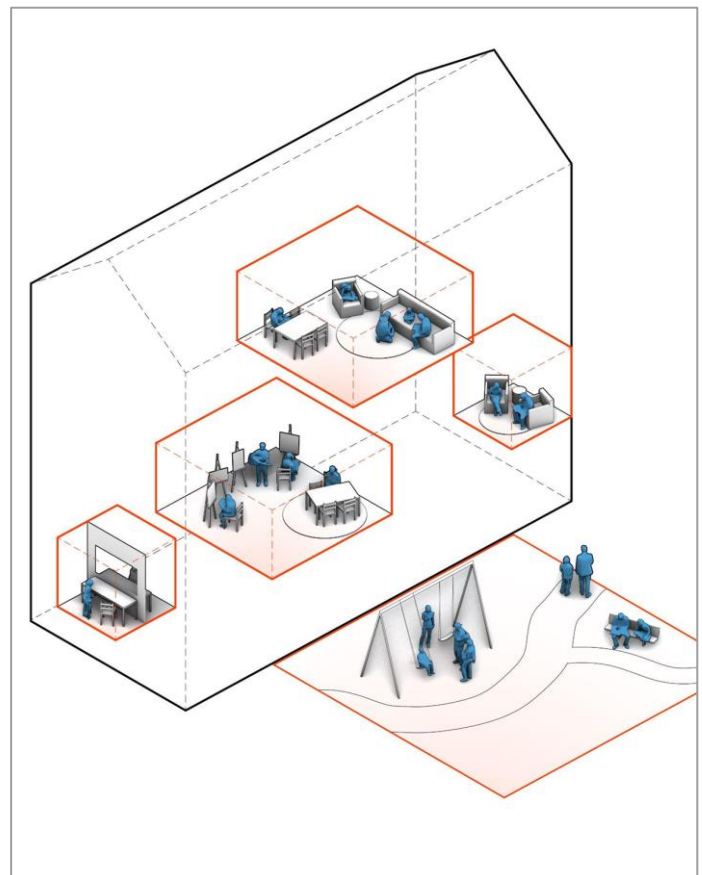
## Recommendation 6.3— Engage residents in the design and building of a new visitation space

It's difficult to make new positive memories in a space that feels like a prison, particularly for children. A new visitation space would be an indispensable signal of culture change.

Imagine a space where parents were able to teach their children how to ride bikes and partners were able to sit next to their spouses in a living room-like setting. Imagine a space where families can be reunited, relationships healed, and supportive networks maintained.

### ACTION ITEMS

Renovate the visitation space at San Quentin. The chosen architecture and construction firms should lead a collaborative design process with families, and explore partnerships with children's museums or other creative family spaces in the community to assist in the design of a family-friendly space.



This is an illustrative rendering of a reimagined visitation space.

## Case study

### Family Visitation Spaces: Washington State Department of Corrections

Connecting with family and friends is essential to rehabilitation. The intentionality of the design of visitation spaces can facilitate this bonding.

As one part of a much larger effort towards normalization, Washington State Department of Corrections is renovating existing visitation centers to promote bonding of those who are incarcerated with their children.

In Fall 2023, a new gaming area was opened at Stafford Creek Corrections Center for those with children who are pre-teens or teenagers.

In 2024, the visiting centers at Stafford Creek Corrections Center, Clallam Bay Corrections Center, and Washington Correction Center for Women will be renovated to include areas specifically for children 8 years old and younger. The Washington State Department of Corrections partnered with the [Hands On Children's Museum](#) in Olympia, Washington to design these spaces. Learn more [here](#).



The new gaming area at Stafford Creek is meant to facilitate family bonding with pre-teens and teens. (Photos courtesy of Washington State Department of Corrections)



This is a rendering of the new visitation spaces in Washington State. (Photo courtesy of Washington State Department of Corrections)

# 07

## Provide Pathways to Meaningful Employment Before Reentry

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### OBJECTIVE

Make the path toward meaningful employment clear and accessible from day one of incarceration.

### DATA POINT

Over 60% of formerly incarcerated people [are unemployed](#)<sup>61</sup> one year after their release.





ENTRANCE

FURNITURE F

“Jobs are a no-brainer for public safety. If you don't set up the conditions for people to have a job and a career path after they return home, if all they see is barriers to good jobs, they're much more likely to turn to crime to survive.”

—CBO LEADER



# Rebuilding a life must include making a living.

## THE CHALLENGE

A job and stable income are key indicators of success for a person coming home after incarceration. **Yet over 60%<sup>61</sup> of formerly incarcerated people in the U.S. are unemployed one year after release.** For this reason, the process of finding employment should begin long before the moment of reentry.

Meaningful workforce opportunities are critical to public safety. Research shows formerly incarcerated people who are employed have a **lower likelihood<sup>62</sup>** of post-release offense. Without support to set people up for a safe and productive career when they return home, we increase the likelihood that people return to criminal or underground opportunities to make a living and survive, further exacerbating crime and recidivism.

There are jobs available to formerly incarcerated people, but not enough support to help with job placement. There is little to no coordination between San Quentin and the state's investment in employment and career services.

Programs inside prison must better match people to these opportunities, taking into account any barriers they may face for long-term success.

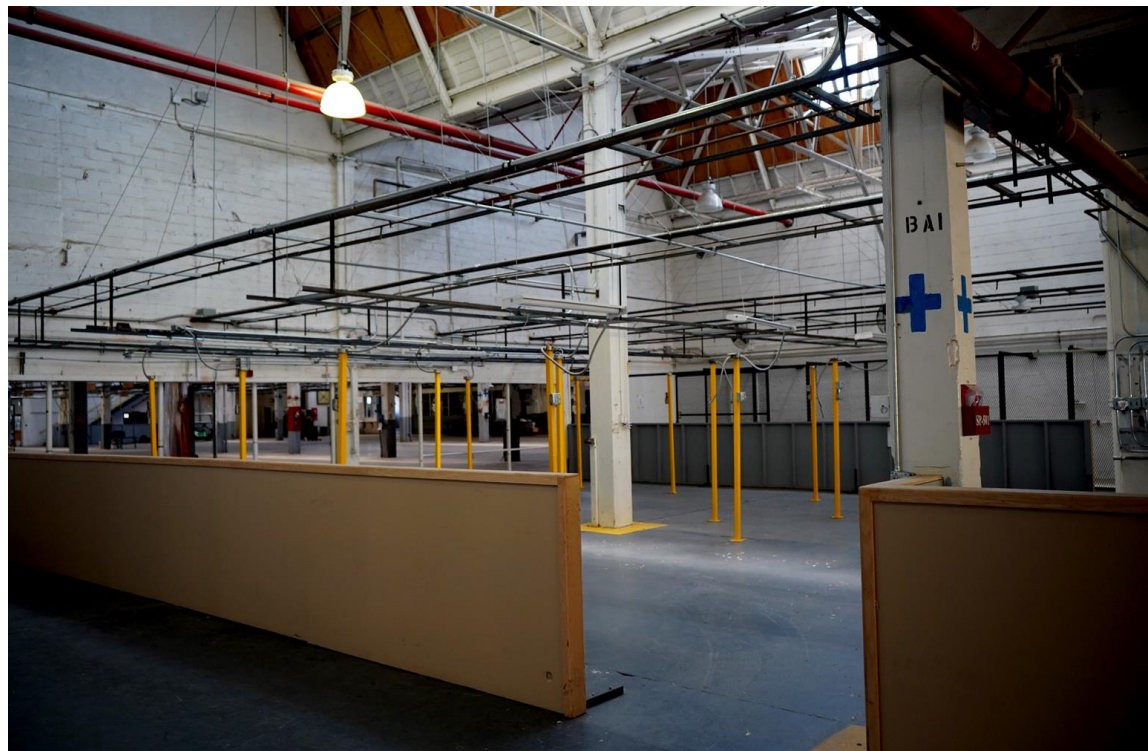
Residents are working in key roles across the San Quentin community: as peer mentors, kitchen staff, healthcare workers, in construction, in IT services, and in media. But despite this employment, the skills built are not compensated internally and do not always translate into recognizable experience or employment beyond prison. Many residents also leave in debt, unable to access any additional training they may need to obtain a career with a livable and family sustainable wage.



This is the current entrance to the part of campus with Building 38. PIA Industries refers to “The California Prison Industry Authority” (CALPIA), which manages prison employment programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Establish local employment pipelines and training for job placement
- 7.2 Offer fair pay for prison work
- 7.3 Expand paid and credentialed peer mentorship opportunities
- 7.4 Provide remote work opportunities and the tools and spaces to support them
- 7.5 Sustain opportunities for residents to engage in learning that improves confidence, knowledge, and skills



This is Building 38 today. It will be torn down and replaced with rehabilitation-focused buildings.

## Recommendation 7.1— Establish local employment pipelines and training for job placement

Job training programs, especially those that prepare students for career-track industry jobs and those that meet local labor market needs, are essential. Residents need programming that sets them up for a job, career growth, and stability after returning home from prison. Programs must be evaluated, in part, for their ability to help people get and retain a job, scale of jobs available, and/or the additional soft skills they provide.

There are evidence-based examples of creating pathways for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people to get jobs with high growth potential in local labor markets.

[Research from the Vera Institute of Justice](#),<sup>63</sup> conducted across five states, shows that career-track jobs, with union-memberships, benefits, and reliable and well-paying salaries help reduce recidivism and ensure people with conviction histories can thrive. For example, in Michigan, participants in the Vocational Village skilled-trade program in the Michigan Department of Corrections have a 9.8% recidivism rate compared to the state average of 27%.

Job training opportunities should keep pace with local needs. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts a 27% growth in employment for solar photovoltaic installers and a 44% growth for wind turbine service technicians from 2021 to 2031. Other growing fields include construction, hospitality/entertainment, healthcare, IT, and logistics/utilities. Job training in growing fields would be prime opportunities for people who are incarcerated.

Such partnerships (with CBOs, employers, trade schools, unions) can start providing education, support, and opportunities while a resident is still incarcerated. Every resident should have opportunities to build key skills needed for employment in the community.

“We need to figure out how we can translate what folks are working on from the inside to the outside.”

—SAN QUENTIN RESIDENT



A San Quentin resident works in the vocational woodshop.



## ACTION ITEMS

Expand CA Workforce Development Board's Prison to Employment program to coordinate efforts at San Quentin with state or federally funded investments (e.g., American Job Centers of California (AJCC), local workforce development boards, CBOs, industry experts, and adult education training programs.)

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Assess and identify local job opportunities in paroling communities (e.g., partnership between Department of Rehabilitative Programs, Department of Labor, and an external labor market analyst like Lightcast. Use this knowledge to assess job training opportunities on a regular (e.g., annual) basis.

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Invest in expanding and developing credentialed programs that train residents for positions that are available in the communities to which people are most often re-entering. Engage those partners (e.g., CBOs, trade schools, employers) prior to release to jointly develop residents' career and employment plans.

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Introduce early career assessments and career training into each resident's Rehabilitation and Reentry Plan. *See [Recommendation 3.1](#).*

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Evaluate workforce development programs primarily based on their ability to help people get and retain a job following their release, considering the scale of jobs available in the regions residents are likely to parole into and their support for developing "soft" skills such as communication and leadership.

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Expand partnerships with local unions (e.g., United Auto Workers, United Brotherhood of Carpenters) and trade schools. Engage them in workforce training opportunities for people who are incarcerated.

Explore dialogue and partnership between CDCR, California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA), and workforce CBOs for best practice learnings for workforce development in service of rehabilitation and reentry (e.g. soft skill development, employability in gross sector industries, vocational trade school partnerships, apprenticeships, tracking outcomes, etc.)

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Build partnerships with Fair Chance employers and CBOs that have demonstrated a commitment to hiring and supporting formerly incarcerated people.

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Increase opportunities for formerly incarcerated people to directly share their experiences securing employment, addressing barriers, and the ways they succeeded.

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Build on [CALFIRES's conservation \(fire\) camp](#) infrastructure to offer additional opportunities for people to give back to California while living in a less restrictive environment, such as state park trail maintenance. *Learn more about [CalFires here](#).*



## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- In many industries, there are still barriers to employment including record checks, stigma against hiring formerly incarcerated people, limits to licenses / credentials for high-paying jobs, and accessible transportation options to jobs from affordable housing.
- Labor market needs are highly regional and can shift quickly as industries change. Employment and job skills training partnerships need to be strategic and focused on industries and employers with actual jobs available that are accessible to residents, before and after release.
- Care should be taken to ensure that prison partnerships are not created with employers who are unwilling to pay fair wages or become invested in maintaining or growing the prison population as an affordable labor pool. We recommend a Workforce Advisory Board be established, in part to vet these partners and opportunities (*see [Recommendation 10.6](#)*).
- Introducing higher paying jobs into the prison can create an imbalance of opportunities. If such opportunities are offered an advisory board that includes currently and formerly incarcerated people should be established to weigh in on such opportunities.
- The state can utilize an all-of-government approach to ensure all government agencies who hire people who are incarcerated (e.g., CDCR, CALPIA, etc.) provide opportunities that teach or reinforce transferable job skills, directly connect people to employment after prison in communities, and track outcomes.
- Government agencies (across state, counties, and cities) hire incarcerated people throughout California. Encourage equal employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated people and reduce barriers for contractors/vendors that work with government agencies.

## Case Studies

### Colby Community College



Colby Community College is aimed at preparing incarcerated individuals at the Norton Correctional Facility in the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) for careers in the growing fields of solar photovoltaic and wind technology. Colby Community College offers an Associate of Applied Science in Sustainable/Renewable Energy, focusing on solar photovoltaic and wind technology.

Students can earn their degrees in four semesters. Graduates of this program typically earn \$25 per hour and upward of \$70,000 per year in careers related to solar photovoltaic or wind technology.

San Quentin could consider partnerships with local community colleges to create training and employment pipelines for jobs in growing industries such as these.

### Urban Alchemy



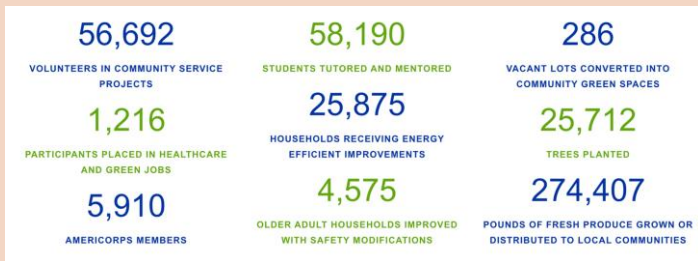
In the San Francisco Bay Area, formerly incarcerated people who have had rehabilitation opportunities are contributing to the public safety workforce through Urban Alchemy. [Urban Alchemy](#) is a social enterprise that provides peacekeeping services to address incidents of trauma, addiction and mental illness that are happening in public spaces.

Most of the team members have served life sentences in prison, where they have engaged in tremendous amounts of self work to parole back home. They have a keen understanding of the underlying issues of trauma and what is needed for recovery. Their personal, lived experiences demonstrate skills of de-escalation, crisis response, diversion programs, violence interruption, and reentry counseling.

San Quentin and CDCR could facilitate partnerships/training programs with organizations like Urban Alchemy which view residents' lived experiences are viewed as assets.

# Case Studies

## The Center for Sustainable Careers



[The Center for Sustainable Careers](#) in Baltimore, Maryland, serves as a prime example of how to include formerly incarcerated people in the green economy. The Center’s mission is to: “make Baltimore’s economy more equitable and sustainable.” In a city like Baltimore, which has been affected by mass incarceration and is already experiencing the impacts of the climate crisis, the urgency of their mission is clear.

The Center does not have any educational requirements for its services and 92% of the Center’s students have been incarcerated at some point in their lives. The Center embraces this, recognizing that formerly incarcerated people face unique barriers to employment and need support in more than just acquiring technical skills. The Center provides students with things like bus passes, meals, and individualized case management to help support them overcome the barriers they face. They also help participants get their driver’s licenses reinstated and provide financial support to help trainees buy a vehicle, if needed.

The Center structures its work in three parts: workforce development, social enterprise, and job quality advancement. First, it offers workforce development and training to provide participants with the hard and soft skills necessary to succeed on the job. The training focuses on five key green career tracks: brownfields remediation, residential energy efficiency, stormwater management, solar installation, and land resource management.

Secondly, it emphasizes “social enterprise” by modeling inclusive hiring practices and ensuring that all of its students get on-the-job training. Third, it works directly with employers, encouraging them to commit to equitable hiring practices. In turn, the Center helps these employers grow their businesses by marketing their companies as socially conscious and directing procurement opportunities to them.

The model has been extremely successful: 94% of its graduates secure stable employment.

## Case Studies

### California Conservation Camp Program



CDCR, in cooperation with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACFD) and local CBOs, jointly operates 35 conservation camps, commonly known as fire camps, located in 25 counties across California. All camps are minimum-security facilities and staffed with correctional staff.

Camp participants earn time credit toward their sentences and are paid for their work. Every conservation camp offers rehabilitative and educational services, including substance use programs, religious programs, and GED and college courses and offers visiting programs for family and loved ones. Opportunities should exist for other forms of state service, such as clearing trails in state parks or flood preparedness work on coastlines for residents to earn both money and work experience.

### Washington State Department Of Corrections Graduated Reentry Program



The goal of the Graduated Reentry Program (“GRE”) is to provide opportunities for incarcerated individuals to build skills through delivery of treatment, programs, work, education or participation in cognitive behavioral interventions, while in a partial confinement setting.

GRE allows residents to serve the final months of their term in partial confinement in home detention with electronic monitoring. This is an example of how an on-ramp back into community life can be used to ease the process of reentry and sets residents up for success.



## Case Studies

### Last Mile



*(Photo courtesy of The Last Mile)*

The Last Mile (TLM) provides opportunities for personal and professional growth for justice-impacted individuals through education and technology training. Since its inception in 2010 at San Quentin State Prison, TLM has expanded its reach to correctional facilities across the U.S. to provide in-classroom curricula and course material that prepare students for meaningful employment.

The Tech Center at San Quentin has two specialized programs: Web Development and Audio and Video Production. The programs are tailored to prepare students with the essential skills needed for successful careers in these high demand fields.

TLM's in-prison programs integrate technical and soft skills training with job readiness preparation and continues its support post-release, offering wraparound case management services for program alumni. Services include professional development workshops, mock interviews, continued education opportunities, digital skills training, and job placement assistance. TLM extends its impact through strategic partnerships with the Bay Area community and businesses, maximizing resources to provide comprehensive support for alumni.

### Next Chapter



Next Chapter provides formerly incarcerated individuals with opportunities in the tech industry. The tech sector faces a talent shortage, while formerly incarcerated individuals struggle with unemployment and societal reintegration. Next Chapter bridges this gap by offering tech training and employment opportunities, thus addressing workforce needs, reducing recidivism and creating a more inclusive workplace. Next Chapter builds partnerships with tech companies, offering tailored training programs, and facilitating direct employment opportunities.

CBOs within San Quentin could facilitate partnerships/training programs with organizations like Next Chapter, to ensure residents are prepared to participate in such programs through specific training, skills development, and mentorship from formerly incarcerated people who are program participants.

## Recommendation 7.2— Offer fair pay for prison work

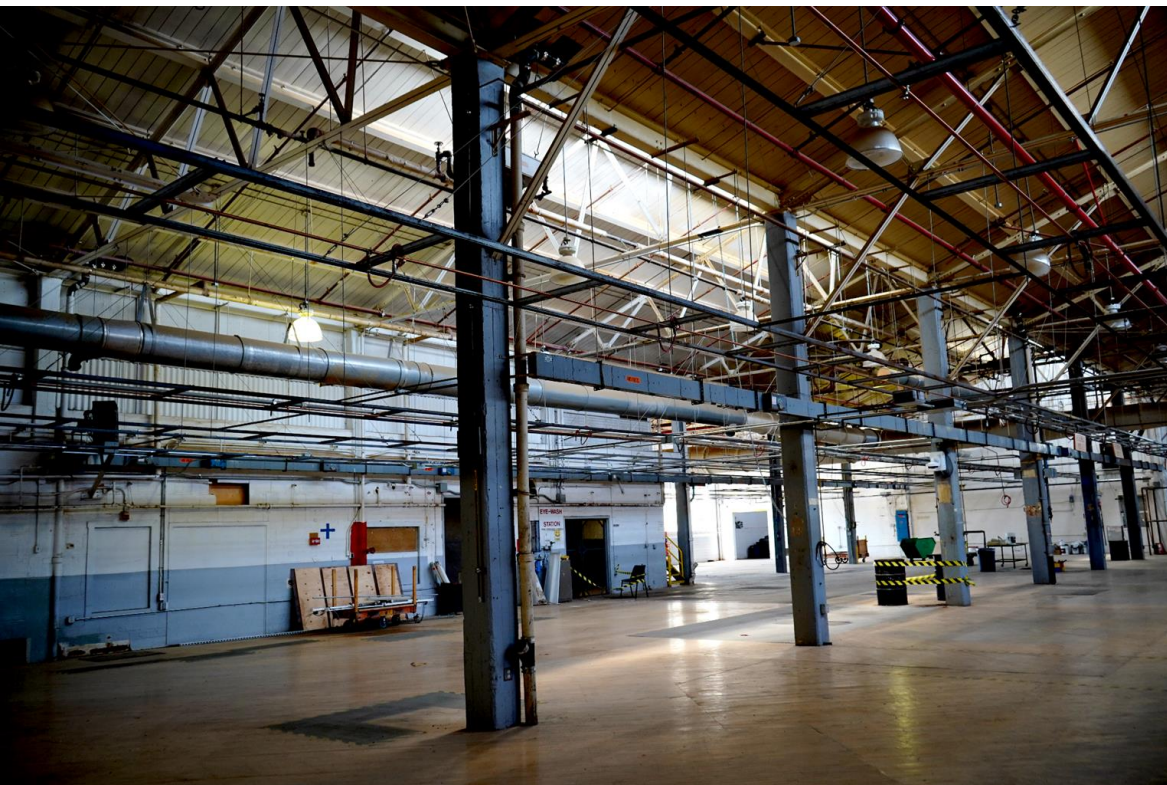
Residents are working in key roles across the San Quentin community: as kitchen staff, peer mentors, health workers, and in construction, IT services, and media.

But despite this employment, the skills built are not compensated well internally and do not always translate into recognizable experience or employment beyond the prison walls. Many residents also leave in debt, unable to access any additional training they may need to obtain a career with a livable and family sustainable wage.

San Quentin should look into finding ways to fairly compensate its residents, so they can build savings and pay restitution while inside. **We recommend developing a separate working group to assess opportunities and determine the possibility of creating a framework for ethical hiring practices for San Quentin residents to earn fair wages while incarcerated.**

**“I work 70 hours a week and max out at 150 hours a month. It’s 7 cents per hour.”**

—SAN QUENTIN RESIDENT



Building 38 was formerly a factory where incarcerated people built furniture.

## ACTION ITEMS

We acknowledge there is a [proposed amendment](#) of Section 3041.2 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), “Title 15, Crime Prevention and Corrections, Division 3, Chapter 1, regarding Inmate Pay Rates, Schedules, and Exceptions.” We are aligned with the recommendation to eliminate all unpaid work assignments, reducing the full-time compensation hours for those who want to engage in additional rehabilitation-focused programming, and increasing pay for all incarcerated people.

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Establish an advisory board to have input into the ethical consideration of introducing potential workforce opportunities within San Quentin that offer paid employment opportunities for residents at the institution and protect against unethical practices.

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Explore a variety of vehicles to fund greater wage increases for incarcerated people: e.g., increase CDCR budget, private-public partnerships, joint ventures, reallocating funding from other state agencies, or direct contracts with employers.

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Make labor skills understandable to outside employers through credentialing and programming (e.g. resume preparation classes with paid peer mentors) to help residents connect their work experience on the inside to opportunities on the outside. For example, partner with CCSF to credential working in the kitchen to contribute as credits toward a Culinary Arts and Hospitality Studies degree program.

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Continue incentive-based programming to increase enrollment in critical, rehabilitative programming. This may include time off sentences, payment, and special events/services. State budget constraints may dictate which of these incentives is feasible.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- In 2022, the ACLU and University of Chicago Law School [published a report](#) about how jobs within prisons exploit labor, from incarcerated people being exempt from workplace protection laws, to low wages, to labor often involving products or services that benefit the prison and offset prison costs. Such information is critical to weigh when considering the expansion of paid opportunities to work inside San Quentin
- The CDCR has a fixed budget for providing pay to incarcerated people. Improving wages requires the legislature to increase in the budget for CDCR for resident pay or explore other means of funding increased wages or reducing incarcerated population
- While the council agreed on creating incentives for programming, there are two schools of thought for paying people for completing programming. Some contend that the job of people who are incarcerated and separated from society is rehabilitation. Therefore, they should be paid for engagement in any rehabilitative programming (e.g., educational programs, ISUDT), in line with practices in Norway’s prison system and research that demonstrates ultimate cost savings to the state. Others contend that residents should not be paid for participating in rehabilitative programming, as people in society are not paid for completing education and treatment.

## Recommendation 7.3— Expand paid and credentialed peer mentorship opportunities

A well-trained, well-intentioned mentor is invaluable to people as they navigate time in prison. Residents and formerly incarcerated people are equipped to share their earned wisdom with others—and especially effective when they embody the background and experiences of their mentees. However, mentors often lack the compensation and recognition they deserve.

Experienced peer-mentors are key to providing support, advice, and motivation to residents on their path toward rehabilitation. They can also help residents learn to navigate complex tasks like how to schedule medical appointments or apply for a job from prison. Further, formerly incarcerated mentors are credible, experienced support and often have a critical fund of knowledge for preparing for reentry.

Additionally, holding a mentorship role can be a transformational experience in itself. Mentors can gain certification, income, and a sense of purpose from the role and provide support for programs such as Youth Offender Mentors, Criminal Gangs Anonymous Mentors, and Reentry Mentors. The experience can also be an asset in future job applications.

There are a few mentor certification programs currently in place, such as for Peer Literacy Mentors and ISUTD mentors, but there is an opportunity to expand and professionalize mentorship programs to allow more residents to get paid for their mentorship work. Increasing peer mentorship opportunities is also in line with the vision of the new California Model.

### ACTION ITEMS

Increase pay numbers of all peer mentors and community health workers. At a minimum, raise to pay of the Offender Mentor Certification Program (OMCP) members.

Explore efficient ways CBO peer mentorship roles can be paid through CDCR.

Partner with CBOs, academic institutions, and funders to expand the availability of training and certification of peer mentors through the OMCP and ensure credentials and diplomas are recognizable in the outside community, beyond San Quentin, and that they do not identify the prison in their title.

Create efficient gate clearance for formerly incarcerated mentors to enter and serve inside facilities. See [Recommendation 1.4](#) about hiring formerly incarcerated ISUTD counselors.

Expand peer mentoring programs to engage the unengaged, for example programs designed to engage people with shorter, determinate sentences and those who have not participated in any programming (e.g., Youthful Offender Program) or those that offer consistent mentoring presence and community on yards (e.g., Anti-Recidivism Coalition's [Hope and Redemption Teams](#)).

Establish a tiered “Train the Trainer” model to ensure a dynamic pipeline of trained mentors for key programs including Rehabilitation Care team, Youthful Offender Program (YOP), and others.

Enable voluntary transfers of senior mentors with indeterminate or long sentences to serve as paid trainers with special living conditions at other institutions to scale successful San Quentin programs across the state.



## Case Study

### Guiding Rage Into Power (GRIP) Training Institute

[GRIP](#) is an accountability and healing program. It began in 2012 at San Quentin. In 2016 and 2017, GRIP expanded to 5 institutions.

Rooted in Restorative Justice principles, the program's trauma-informed model integrates cutting-edge neuroscience research. Students engage in a yearlong, in-depth journey to comprehend the origins of their violence and develop skills to track and manage strong impulses rather than acting out in harmful ways. They transform destructive beliefs and behaviors into an attitude of emotional intelligence that prevents re-victimization.

A major component of the program is that it functions as a peer education model where experienced students co-facilitate the classes and mentor newer students. The program also is able to certify incarcerated people as facilitators of domestic violence prevention as a job skill.

### Youth Offender Program (YOP)



In this photo, YOP Mentors, mentees and staff at Valley State Prison are recording a podcast episode of CDCR Unlocked. (Photo courtesy of CDCR)

The Youth Offender program was founded in 2017 at Valley State Prison (VSP) in Chowchilla, California. Today, there are 230 mentors for 491 youth mentees (who are 18-25 years old) at VSP. The program has reduced the number of violent incidents at VSP, creating a more secure environment for those who are incarcerated and staff.

The mentors (who are incarcerated) provide guidance and encouragement for youth offenders to participate in rehabilitative programming. They also document the daily behavior and mindset of their mentees.

To become a mentor, a person must complete the Effective Mentorship and Group Facilitation Handbook, and then 500 internship hours, logging their time spent with the youth. Once those hours are complete and verified, they become mentors and are given 6 credits at Fresno Pacific University. Youth participants also attend a 12-month rehabilitative program called CLU (Changing Lives, Understanding Beliefs), which is taught by mentor facilitators.

CDCR has designated 9 prisons, including San Quentin, as places that will soon launch YOP programs. San Quentin has 106 people who are incarcerated between the ages of 18-25 (as of December 2023.)

## Recommendation 7.4— Provide remote work opportunities and the tools and spaces to support them

One of the best ways to prepare residents to succeed in the communities they are set to return to is for them to obtain practical work experience.

The shift toward remote work unlocks opportunities for residents to get real work experience from anywhere with a wifi connection. Not only can remote work help residents adapt to a modern working environment and build real-world skills, but it can also allow them to earn income and reduce any debt they might have.

With advances in virtual technologies, remote internships and full-time paid job opportunities can be made more available to residents. Internet access and technology-enabled spaces allow residents to hold jobs, such as call center support, software engineering, and data entry roles.

Residents will also need access to private and group work and study spaces to encourage learning and development. This means study spaces outside the cell and increased access to spaces that mirror classroom and workplace environments

### ACTION ITEMS

Expand the tablet-based technology systems to include education and employment training programs offered through adult education charter schools, community colleges, and other online training in growing industries (IT, cybersecurity).

Increase exposure and access to technology as well as basic technology training to prepare residents for professional work environments. Ideally, these programs would be run by people previously incarcerated who have experienced reentry.

Create accessible spaces for remote work beyond housing units that mirror the classroom and the workplace.

*Also note the potential concerns with in-reach workforce opportunities described in [Additional Considerations](#) in [Recommendation 7.2](#).*

Ensure internet connectivity throughout campus.

*Example:* Oregon Corrections Enterprises is a semi-independent state agency that was created to help the state's prisons come into compliance with the requirement that all able-bodied incarcerated people be put to work. It [operates](#) a network of 28 businesses inside 11 of Oregon's 14 state prisons. Residents can build skills through jobs such as working in a call center to gain job-ready skills and earn real wages.

For any hardware or software brought in or added to computers, provide IT support to assist residents. Otherwise, the inevitable issues that arise can become a barrier to access and a burden for prison staff, CBO staff and volunteers who are not responsible for the technology.

## Recommendation 7.5— Sustain opportunities for residents to engage in learning that improves confidence, knowledge, and skills

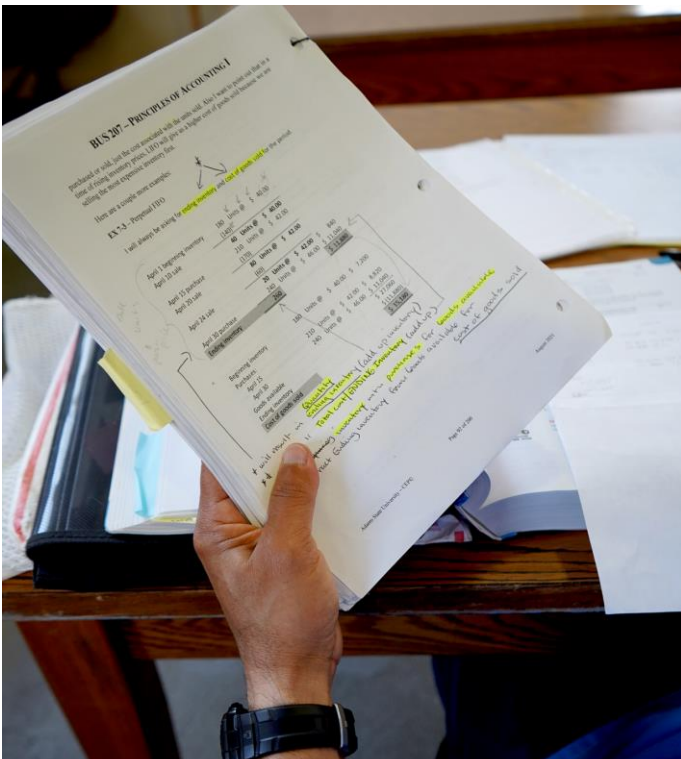
Even if they are not part of a distinct career pathway leading to a specific job, learning experiences focused on personal or professional interests or practical life skills are still valuable. These programs provide critical support in aiding personal transformation, confidence, and soft skills critical to getting and retaining a job. These include college, arts, and media programs.

California has significantly expanded access to college-level education to incarcerated people through its proactive recruitment, partnerships with universities, and in-reach of community-based volunteer and/or CBO-led college programming opportunities. For example, through the Renewing Communities Initiative, incarcerated individuals have access to over 300 educational institutions across the State. Mount Tamalpais College offers an Associate of Arts degree program at San Quentin, free of charge. Since 1996, the college has taught over 4,000 participants, of which about 200 have graduated.

Research from the Vera Institute of Justice has found that incarcerated people who participate in college programs in prison are [48% less likely to be re-incarcerated](#)<sup>63</sup> than those who do not. Formerly incarcerated students also saw employment rates increase on average by 10% after participating in a college-in-prison program.

**"There are essential skills of critical thinking, building self-esteem, finishing what you started."**

—CBO LEADER



## ACTION ITEMS

Continue to establish and cultivate formal partnerships with local community colleges and adult education (WIOA Title II) programs like Cal State’s “Project Rebound” that offer access to a wide range of learning experiences, beyond direct job placement: the arts, programming, design, and higher education.

Ensure that college programs include opportunities for evaluation of learning differences so that accommodations may be made where warranted.

Expand arts programming such as Arts in Corrections by providing dedicated spaces and paid (incarcerated) artist facilitators & peer mentors for different mediums.

Maintain environment and excellence of existing programs, and create more entry points for more residents to join coveted programs (e.g., San Quentin News, Ear Hustle, Uncuffed, San Quentin TV)

*Example:* Writers Guild is a program that provides training for aspiring writers to learn how to write AP-style articles and apply to San Quentin news.

Offer programming to build professional development skills including: emotional literacy, learning professional environments, and career growth opportunities.

Continue core job literacy programs like Career Technical Education (CTE) Literacy that provide skills that prepare people for entry-level vocational opportunities.

Offer financial literacy programs as well as financial tools that teach and enable residents to budget, save, spend, and invest while incarcerated.

*Example:* Explore financial literacy programs and the ability for residents to have access to debit-like cards and accounts. Accounts could be held by a CBO or CDCR to protect residents from fraud.

*Example:* While the federal government suspends social security benefits while incarcerated, connect eligible residents to social security so it can begin / become reinstated upon release.





# Case Study

## San Quentin Media Center



The San Quentin Media Center and the media that has come out of it, such as [San Quentin News](#), [Ear Hustle](#), [Uncuffed](#), and [Forward This](#), represent the type of rehabilitative programming that helps residents build the skills and confidence they need to succeed after release.

Equally as important as the media and collaboration skills residents learn as part of the Media Center, are the opportunities it affords them to seize control of their own narratives and tell their own stories.

The San Quentin Media Center — and the award-winning programs that come out of it — gives residents a platform to share stories of hope, analysis of what needs to change, and recommendations for how to optimize the possibility of successful rehabilitation.

Participants and leaders have gained technical skills, accolades, and practical work experience that can help them find employment on the outside.



A meeting of the staff of San Quentin News.

# Case Study

## Mount Tamalpais College



*(Photos courtesy of Mount Tamalpais College)*

Mount Tamalpais College (MTC), based at San Quentin, offers a 61-unit Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Arts that includes courses in writing, math, science, the humanities, and the social sciences. It also provides a college preparatory program in math and writing, year-round academic support, and co-curricular activities designed to strengthen students' academic skills, while advancing their civic engagement.

MTC offers roughly 20 college courses each semester, three semesters per year. Approximately 300 students are enrolled each semester. MTC charges no fees or tuition and provides students with school supplies, free of charge. The sole requirement for participation is a GED or high school diploma. No student is excluded based on age, length of sentence, commitment offense, or time left to serve.

MTC's student services staff provide wraparound services, whether to address learning disabilities, physical disabilities, college transfer needs, parole planning, or post-release services. It also runs an active Student Learning Center each semester, which hosts tutoring services, study groups, drop-in advising, and a new computer lab.

"If we had more classroom space, we could at least double the number of students we serve. We would also love to one day offer college classes for San Quentin's staff, too. That would truly transform the place," said Jody Lewen, the President of Mount Tamalpais College, when talking about its potential future.

It's been done before. The Prison Education Program at Saint Louis University provides a liberal arts education for both incarcerated people and prison staff at two facilities: The Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center in Bonne Terre, Missouri, and The Federal Correctional Institution in Greenville, Illinois.

MTC also offers support beyond San Quentin. The college works hard to maintain contact with its former students after release, connecting them to the college's wide network. MTC also provides skill-building opportunities, such as mock interviewing and workshops in computer literacy and business development. And it creates peer support networks for alumni through community engagement events and online networking.

## 08

# Transition People into Community Environments Successfully

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## OBJECTIVE

Increase public safety by preparing residents for reintegration in environments that are more reflective of the outside world as quickly and safely as possible.

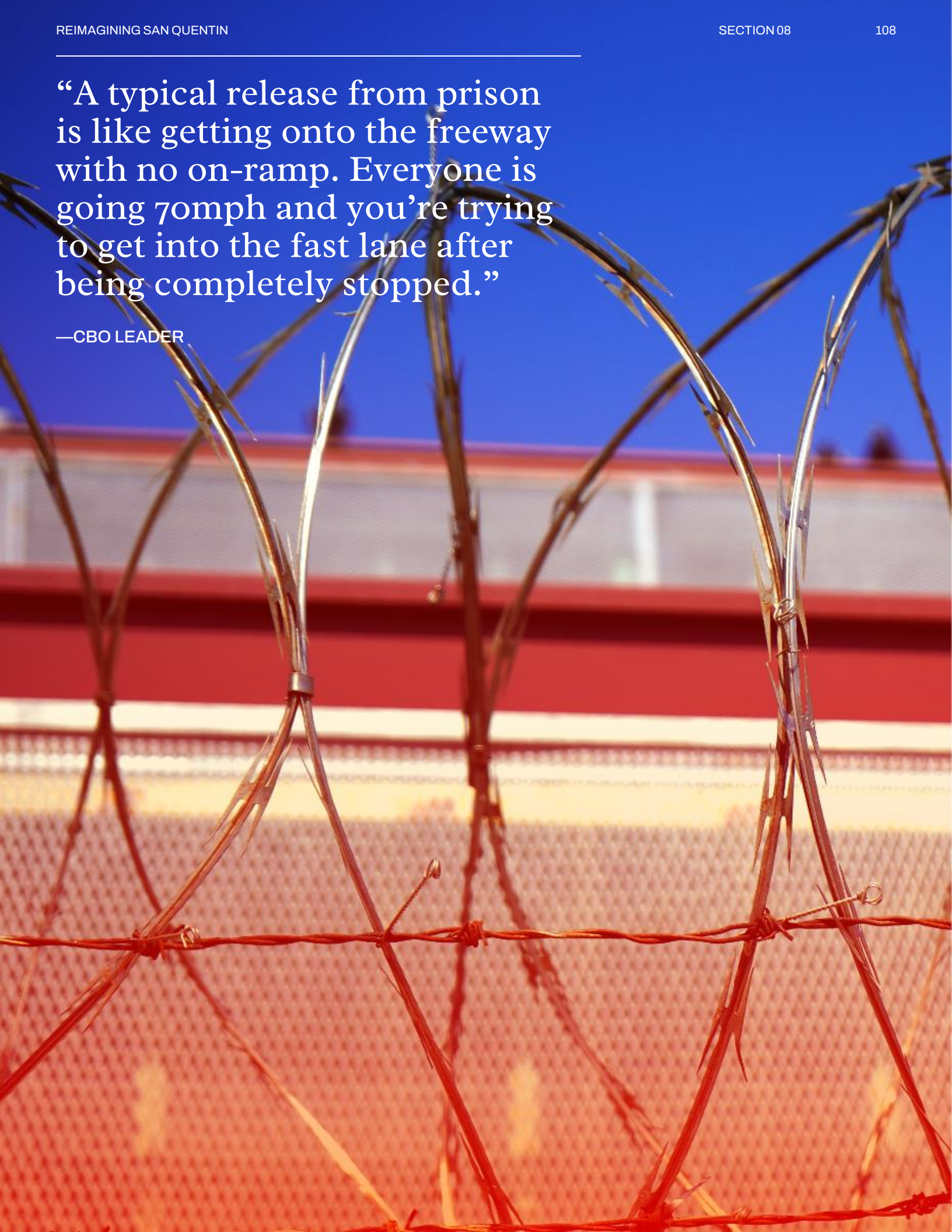
## DATA POINT

Formerly incarcerated people are 10 times more likely to experience homelessness than the general public.<sup>65</sup>



“A typical release from prison is like getting onto the freeway with no on-ramp. Everyone is going 70mph and you’re trying to get into the fast lane after being completely stopped.”

—CBO LEADER





# Successful reentry creates public safety.

## THE CHALLENGE

At San Quentin and across CDCR, reentry support services begin while people are still incarcerated, in partnership with the Division of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP), Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO), and community-based services. An institution is not an ideal setting to practice normal activities conducive to the real-world experience needed to fully reintegrate into society.

**There is no better preparation for coming home than actually being in the community—setting up appointments, attending classes, figuring out transportation, interviewing for jobs, and building relationships.** When residents are supported in their transition into community life, they are more likely to succeed once they are back out on their own and less likely to recidivate.

Today, the “cold return” back to society is all too common; individuals are released back into our cities, towns, neighborhoods, and families without the care or services they need to succeed. Often, they are given a bus ticket to help them relocate back to their community but are left on their own to find housing, employment, healthcare, and to reconnect with their community.

According to [statewide data](#)<sup>66</sup> from CDCR’s needs assessment tool, Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS), approximately 60% of parolees released statewide from June 30, 2022 to June 30, 2023 had a moderate to high need for substance use disorder treatment, 53% had a moderate to high need for employment services, and 46% had a moderate to high risk of reentry residential instability. Formerly incarcerated people face immense pressure to “merge onto the freeway” of community living despite significant challenges and inadequate preparation.

San Quentin is a model for rehabilitation for the state, and an integral part of rehabilitation is successful reentry. We recommend it employs evidence-based models that increase access to community settings for successful reentry and increased public safety. This will only further its reputation as a beacon for rehabilitation and reentry.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Consider developing a Pre-release Community Reentry Program (e.g., MCRP) on San Quentin state property, outside the prison walls
  
- 8.2 Expand foundational support after reentry





## Recommendation 8.1— Consider developing a Pre-release Community Reentry Program (e.g., MCRP) on San Quentin state property, outside the prison walls

**Finishing incarceration in a community setting builds on the work done inside and allows the individual to practice productive citizenship before final release.**

[Male Community Reentry Programs](#) (MCRPs, men’s facilities) and [Custody to Community Transitional Reentry Programs](#) (CCTRPs, women’s facilities) are a humane, dignity-driven, and evidence-based model to reducing recidivism. [In a Stanford University study, MCRPs have been shown to reduce reoffense and recidivism rates](#) by 37% and 92% respectively, and present a 52% reduction in costs in comparison to incarcerating people in traditional prisons.<sup>67</sup>

Many people who are incarcerated in California are eligible to complete their last two years at an MCRP or CCTRP. Participation in MCRP/CCTRP programs are voluntary; they allow residents to plan for reentry while starting to experience reentry sooner and more gradually.

MCRPs/CCTRPs are open campus facilities outside of a prison, in line with international best practices. Residents live in a more community-like setting outside of prison, with lower security, access to phones, computers, and the Internet, more shared spaces, and robust programming geared toward the return home. The physical spaces of the MCRPs/CCTRPs are designed to reflect a home, not a prison. Residents visit the community to access key services (e.g., healthcare, workforce development, education, reunification with family).

**MCRPs/CCTRPs function like a “graduation” from incarceration and represent a moment when the carceral system prioritizes normalization. The goal is that the closer people get to release, the greater freedoms and more everyday, “normal” life experiences they should have, easing their return to society.**

**“MCRPs have been shown to lead to a 92% decrease in the average one-year conviction rate and presents a 52% reduction in costs in comparison to incarcerating people in traditional prisons.”**

—[STANFORD PUBLIC POLICY STUDY](#): “Effects of the Male Community Reentry Program (MCRP) on Recidivism in the State of California”

MCRPs/CCTRPs are a partnerships between CDCR and community-based organizations. “MCRP” and “CCTRP” are the CDCR-designated names of the model. While each MCRP/CCTRP has key components included for fidelity the model, each facility has its own moniker, often named in partnership with participants that live at the MCRP/CCTRP (e.g., Magnolia, La Entrada, Amistad) and its own culture developed locally.

These facilities are also distinct from prison settings in that they are run by, and staffed primarily by, non-profit community-based organizations, with a few CDCR staff in key security positions. The CBO running an MCRP or CCTRP is responsible for coordinating with other community based organizations to provide key services to residents. It is our strong recommendation that any MCRP or CCTRP run in California be run by a nonprofit/CBO. In line with the recent legislation eliminating private prisons, MCRPs and CCTRPs should not be run by for-profit entities.

**Today, it is estimated that over 20,000 currently incarcerated people in California state prisons are eligible for MCRPs/CCTRPs, but only 1200 beds exist.**

The state has earmarked funding for additional MCRP/CCTRP beds, but these facilities can be difficult to build due to several factors, including land use permissions and community concerns. San Quentin’s land could serve as a location for such an investment as it state-owned, has land use permissions required to house people who are serving a sentence, and is proximately located near many Bay Area counties to where people release and where social and job services are available (e.g., San Francisco, Alameda, Contra Costa). CBOs constructing a facility outside of the walls of San Quentin could leverage the existing earmarked funds for services and can tap into public-private partnerships or low-interest loans on the construction of the campus.

*\*Research conducted analyzed the methodology of the programs and services offered at MCRPs, agnostic of locations.*

## ACTION ITEMS

Any decision to build an MCRP at San Quentin must begin by launching a bidding process for nonprofit/CBO partners to build or one or two 200-person MCRPs so that more persons throughout CDCR can serve the final two years of incarceration in a community setting. For-profit entities should be barred from bidding, in line with California's elimination of private prison use.

Allow innovative models for the development and construction of MCRPs, including public-private partnerships, low-interest state loans, and cost-effective construction.

Provide the nonprofit CBO partner access to state land through a long-term land lease (e.g., 50-100 years) to state property. This provides community-based organizations infrastructure to ensure MCRP/CCTRP facilities remain independent from CDCR facilities and cannot be transformed into prison beds in the future.

Offer virtual tours, video/photography, and presentations from current and former MCRP/CCTRP participants to people incarcerated in CDCR facilities to increase education and open dialogue about this housing option.

The Advisory Council strongly recommends that CDCR identify new, non-gendered names for the MCRP/CCTRP housing mechanism. Of note, these housing facilities are open to people of gender-nonconforming identity, making the need for new terminology of utmost importance so that they are as inclusive and welcoming as possible to all who volunteer for the opportunity.



Above, students share their stories during a tour of the Amistad Campus in South Los Angeles. Amistad provides reentry services for up to 184 men in California as they work their way towards reintegration. Below is the courtyard at Amistad. (Photos courtesy of Amity Foundation).





## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Residents of a MCRPs/CCTRP are not required to parole to the county in which the MCRP/CCTRP is located. However, ideally, residents of a facility on San Quentin property will parole to a county in the nearby area: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, or Solano Counties.
- An MCRP at San Quentin will require having a robust, integrated transportation plan for residents to access services and employment opportunities in nearby counties.
- Not all residents of San Quentin who will be released within two years are eligible for MCRPs. **We urge CDCR and/or the legislature to revisit eligibility requirements for MCRPs/CCTRPs to make this opportunity available to more people throughout CDCR.**
- While we recommend giving San Quentin residents priority to a new MCRP on San Quentin's grounds, the beds will also be available to residents throughout the state to provide the opportunity across CDCR.
- Because MCRPs/CCTRPs are partnerships between CDCR and community-based groups, the CBO selected to run the facility and coordinate programs with other CBOs must have experience and capacity in competently balancing the relationship between community and corrections.
- The proximity of an MCRP to San Quentin's campus risks being perceived as an extension of San Quentin's footprint and/or adopting the culture of San Quentin as a correctional facility. Due to land use permissions, several MCRP/CCTRPs are located in former CDCR buildings. Two women's facilities are currently on CDCR properties. San Quentin MCRP can learn best practices from these facilities on maintaining a bounded partnership with CDCR. CDCR staff who work at the MCRP must have clear accountabilities to adhere to the leading CBO's policies and procedures rather than CDCR's operating procedures.
- Residents may want to come back to San Quentin for specific programs or services given the facility's unique programs and vibrant community. Residents should be given the option to return to the facility for these services, peer mentorship opportunities, and/or job assignments if they choose. This would require input and decision-making from participants.
- Evidence for normalization is demonstrated in the MCRP/CCTRP model. For San Quentin to be a rehabilitation center that readies people for reentry, we recommend the facility bring as many attributes of normalization as possible to the prison, alongside employing this model. *See [Recommendation 1.3](#).*
- MCRPs/CCTRPs are voluntary. Some San Quentin residents who are eligible may choose not to go due to their strong community ties at San Quentin

*Note: This recommendation garnered substantial debate and disagreement among some in the Advisory Council. Though there was agreement about the positive impacts of the MCRP model, there were concerns about the proximity to a prison facility, about whether it would benefit San Quentin residents as many may not be eligible for transfer, and fears that an investment in an outside facility would reduce the significance of the changes being proposed inside the facility. The Co-chairs of the Advisory Council have decided to keep the recommendation to explore developing an MCRP on San Quentin land in this report because MCRPs have shown significant evidence-based results in improving reentry outcomes, creating a more normal living environment, and increasing access and connection to community on the outside. Despite these benefits, it has proven difficult to find sites on which to build MCRPs and San Quentin land provides a clear opportunity to be explored.*

## Recommendation 8.2— Expand foundational support after reentry

Stable housing, employment, substance use disorder treatment, social support, and mental health programs are likely to produce more positive post-release outcomes and improve public safety. These services require a continuum of care from the prison, to MCRPs/CCTRP for those who participate, and then into the community.

**Ultimately, the goal is for people to be permanently housed, employed, and healthy when they return to their communities. These indicators are a critical way that the state and a strong network of CBOs can improve quality of life among people impacted by incarceration in California, long-term recidivism rates, and public safety.**

Programs that started at San Quentin must be coordinated with CBOs in the communities people are paroling back into to support a safe and seamless transition of services. [See Recommendation 3.4](#). Further, an all-of-government approach can be implemented to provide funding for CBOs that offer holistic, supportive services at San Quentin to optimize the opportunity for secure and safe transitions home.

People may leave San Quentin with the programming to make them successful and services to meet foundational needs, but still need some funds to get on their feet. California spends approximately \$106,000 per incarcerated person, per year. People who are incarcerated at San Quentin will leave with \$200 of gate money, the same amount they have been given since 1973.

Instead, we recommend that the Governor's Office of Social Innovation work with philanthropy and CDCR to develop a state and philanthropic public-private partnership for a pilot program at San Quentin to provide reentry stipends to increase this baseline. This reentry stipend program should be for people who are transitioning back into the community from San Quentin based on achieved milestones over the first 6 months post release.

Providing stipends to those returning home from incarceration or into community settings [has been shown to improve employment outcomes and increase feelings of financial security](#)<sup>68</sup> upon return to the community.

Further, the evidence has shown that reentry stipends tied to milestones increase participation and completion of crucial reentry tasks. For example, in April 2020, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) launched the Returning Citizens Stimulus program (RCS), a program that offered financial support to returning citizens. Participants were eligible for three monthly payments totaling up to \$2,750 as they reached milestones related to securing employment and financial stability (e.g., enrolling in MediCal and other benefits, attending scheduled appointments, retention in housing and treatment, etc.)

## ACTION ITEMS

Expand support (through public investments and public/private partnerships) in organizations that provide holistic wraparound services, including housing and healthcare to formerly incarcerated people upon release. (e.g., Delancey Street, Ahimsa Collective, Westcare, HR360, CROP, Anti-Recidivism Coalition).

*Example:* [CROP's Ready 4 Life](#) program, is twelve-month housing and workforce program, with holistic wraparound care. The State of California's \$28.5M investment has helped set the conditions for expansion of these services to set participants up to thrive, reduce recidivism, and increase public safety.

*Example:* [The Transitions Clinic Network \(TCN\)](#) is an evidence-based primary care system intervention that improves health and reentry outcomes. TCN hires system-impacted community health workers to engage and support patients returning from incarceration and to serve as liaisons to navigate health and social services upon reentry.

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Establish relationships with community-based services and organizations (through the new Office of Associate Warden of Programs and DRP) to provide the on-ramp to comprehensive reentry services (e.g., healthcare, mental health, housing, job services, educational services, family reunification) in a variety of counties. Train staff to complete warm handoffs to community-based services. *See [Recommendation 3.4](#).*

Create an incentive-based stipend program as people are released, including into less restrictive community environments. Stipends can be tied to milestones such as getting a Social Security number, driver's license, signing up for MediCal, applying to jobs, securing employment, etc.

*Example:* A program run by the Center for Employment Opportunities will give hundreds of Californians released from prisons direct [cash payments of \\$2,400](#), as well as other forms of support. The payments come after certain milestones are met, such as showing progress in finding places to live and work.

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Explore continued funding for these stipends through philanthropy and/or public-private partnerships.

09

# Reduce High Turnover by Providing Services for Staff

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## OBJECTIVE

Support San Quentin staff's basic needs so they are able to do their jobs well.

## DATA POINT

San Quentin has a higher staff turnover rate than other California prisons. Of the approximately 84 who leave annually (due to retirement, separation and transfer.), about 43 transfer<sup>69</sup> to other California institutions. Anecdotally, most transfers leave in search of locations with a lower cost of living.



“If you were up all night, couldn't sleep from heat, no coffee because of no water. ...People have to show up at this very stressful job under those conditions.”

—HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL AT SAN QUENTIN





# Staff need their basic needs met to help others rehabilitate.

## THE CHALLENGE

In a transformed San Quentin, part of the correctional officers' job is to mentor, guide, and support incarcerated people on their path to rehabilitation. For them to take on this role, they must feel cared for and supported in their daily work and careers. In the new San Quentin, correctional officers will be on the frontlines of rehabilitation. Today, inadequate local housing stock has led to long commutes, fatigued staff, and high turnover rates. This affects not just correctional officers, but also San Quentin staff across all disciplines.

A significant challenge affecting staff at San Quentin is the high cost of living in the Bay Area. [The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Marin County is \\$3,188 per month.](#)<sup>70</sup> Nearby Contra Costa County and Alameda County have average rents for a comparable unit at \$2,405 per month. In comparison, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Sacramento County and Kern County is \$1,756 and \$1,137, respectively.

San Quentin grounds have approximately 100 residences dedicated to recruiting and retaining managerial and critical staff positions. The majority of staff are forced to commute long distances due to the high cost of living in the Bay Area. Some staff commute upwards of three hours one way. CDCR currently provides a \$200 stipend to specific classifications; however, the amount barely covers the local bridge tolls.

This staff housing shortage has created a common practice of "dry camping," whereby staff stay in trailers on prison grounds without access to power, water, or utilities. There have been previous attempts to develop the "trailer park," to bring electrical power, sewer and water services in, but they have all failed to garner the necessary budget support.

**Long Shifts and Overworked Staff.** Many correctional officers resort to "double double single" shifts to reduce their commute frequency. In this scenario, officers work two consecutive shifts, typically on consecutive days (e.g., 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) followed by a single shift (e.g., 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.). This practice of working long hours, coupled with exhausting commutes, can easily lead to staff fatigue, mistakes, irritability, accidents, and reduced enthusiasm for their roles.

**High Turnover and Less Experienced Staff.** New prison staff assigned to San Quentin quickly realize they can better care for their families by transferring to prisons located in low-cost areas. San Quentin has an average monthly staff turnover rate of seven, so about 84 leave annually due to retirement, separation (voluntary/involuntary), and transfers to other institutions. Of the 84, about half (43 officers) transfer to other institutions, many because of the high costs of living in the Bay area.<sup>71</sup> The constant influx of less experienced staff disrupts the establishment of a consistent correctional culture within the prison and undermines the development of positive professional relationships between staff and residents.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Improve living conditions for staff
- 9.2 Continue to provide mental health services for staff and destigmatize these services
- 9.3 Create dedicated staff space for eating, storage and gathering



## Recommendation 9.1— Improve living conditions for staff

The success of staff in fully engaging in the rehabilitative model will require an improvement in basic, hygienic, healthy and dignified housing, to allow them to perform their essential duties. This will reduce fatigue and increase job performance, creative problem-solving, and retention. Such conditions should also be developed with an eye towards long-term retention to build consistency in the facility.

Ultimately, discussions should revolve around the construction of staff housing that provides sustainable solutions for any staff (custody, healthcare and beyond) who find it challenging to rent or purchase homes in the expensive Marin County housing market.

### ACTION ITEMS

Provide a housing stipend to staff under a designated salary level to make living in the area more affordable. We believe that CDCR should make recommendations for what salary cutoff this could be.

In the near-term, the Department of General Services should upgrade the dry camping conditions to a “KOA”-style campsite and provide essential amenities such as power, water, and sewer facilities. We also recommend revisiting the proposal to upgrade the San Quentin Trailers.

Explore local and statewide partnerships for better rates at Extended Stay hotel chains that have locations near San Quentin.

Identify high cost of living areas (across CDCR, including San Quentin) and reevaluate retention pay to accurately reflect the differentially increased cost of living for staff working in the affected areas (including correctional officers, teachers, vocational facilitators, healthcare staff and facilities staff.)

Explore options for cost efficient construction of new staff housing near or at San Quentin. Draw inspiration from modular housing units and [Marin County's initiative](#) to develop low-income housing to address the housing crisis among teachers.



## Recommendation 9.2— Continue to provide mental health services for staff and destigmatize these services

Correctional officers work in a high-stress, high-stakes environment with considerable toll on their mental health, physical health, and relationships. The stresses are so high that, on average, [national statistics estimate](#) that a correctional officer's mortality is between ages 59 and 62, which is 14 to 21 years shorter than the general public.<sup>72</sup>

San Quentin currently provides mental health support for staff through a phone app, hotline, and peer support. While these services are available, there remains a stigma associated with seeking mental health assistance in corrections. Further, when peer support is required during a challenging time, there is substantial backfill for staff to meet other staff's need and fulfill their duties.

As we aim to empower their rehabilitative efforts and equip them to address trauma and recovery in others' lives, we must create conditions for staff to access mental health services for themselves and reduce stigma in receiving these services. CDCR must actively promote mental health services for staff, emphasizing the importance of seeking support when needed.

### ACTION ITEMS

Offer dedicated, tailored support from mental health professionals or chaplains to staff through online or on-site services. Frame mental health services as continuing education and as critical to culture change to normalize participation and reduce stigma.

Expand and formalize peer support programs for staff, particularly in response to on-the-job crises. Integrate this offer into staff training.

Introduce interventions that de-stigmatize accessing mental health support for staff during training, management, and day-to-day communications.

Develop an Arts in Corrections course specifically for staff.

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

As well as integrating these peer support roles into the training of staff, CDCR can also earmark resources to backfill staff, so that peer support staff can be properly utilized when needed.

## Recommendation 9.3— Create dedicated staff space for eating, storage and gathering

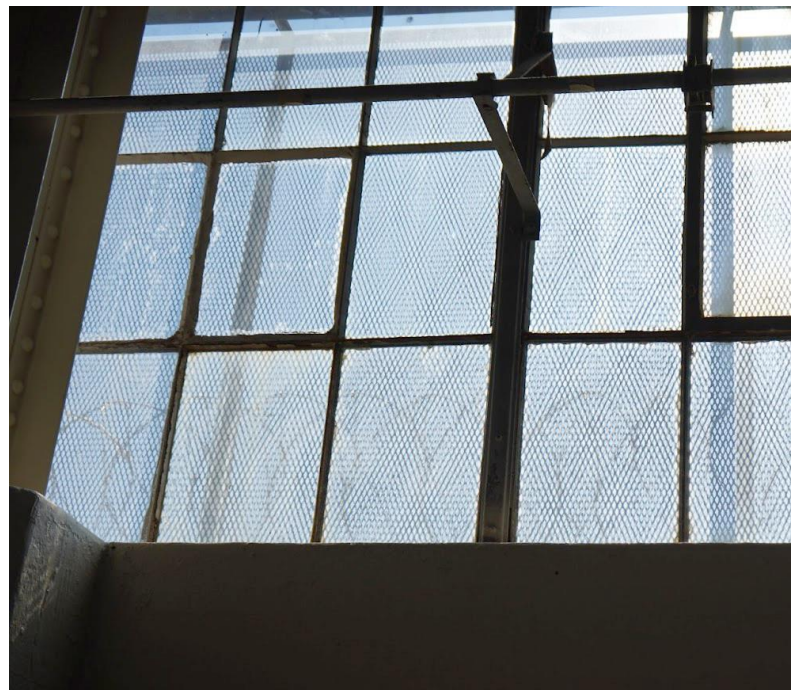
In the short term, there is a pressing need for a place where staff can rest and recover to minimize the experience of excessive fatigue. These quarters would provide a place for staff to sleep, shower, and recover between shifts.

For example, a dedicated staff space could serve as a place to “cool off” after a traumatic or stressful work experience (e.g., interrupting an overdose, suicide, or physical altercation).

San Quentin can ensure a healthier, more experienced, and better-equipped correctional staff by creating a better working environment, ultimately benefiting the rehabilitation of incarcerated people and enhancing public safety.

### ACTION ITEMS

Create a private, accessible break-room space for all prison staff and CBO-led programming staff to use and relax. This space should also include a locker room with accessible showers, dressing rooms, and secure storage.



# 10

## Establish Ongoing Engagement in San Quentin's Transformation

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### OBJECTIVE

Build a team and systems of accountability to bring these recommendations to life.



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“Who is accountable for making this cultural change happen? It needs to be cemented by the penal code or through legislation.”

—FORMER SAN QUENTIN RESIDENT



# Transformation requires ongoing partnership and community input.

## THE CHALLENGE

Each of the recommendations in this report is an ambitious undertaking in itself, requiring research, implementation, data analysis and evaluation, budgeting, and coordinated project management.

For the intent and ambitions of these recommendations to materialize, the right stakeholders will need to be engaged, and a strong organizational infrastructure must be in place. Without this approach, it is unlikely that any of these recommendations will be operationalized.

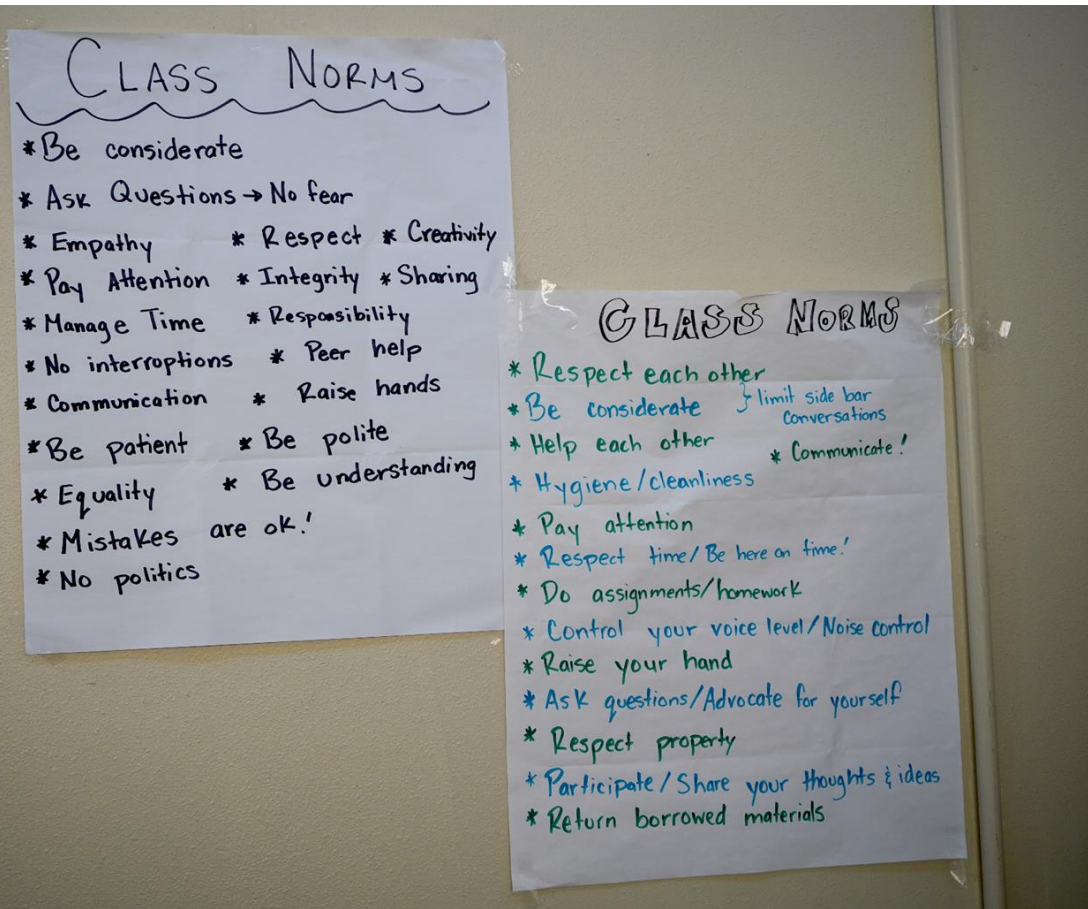
Governor Newsom strategically appointed experts from many perspectives and experiences to this Advisory Council, including people who have lived or worked at San Quentin, community leaders with friends or loved ones who are incarcerated, and leaders of victim/survivor groups. This allowed for healthy tension and dialogue around the most effective approaches to rehabilitation and reentry.

In this section, we include recommendations to continue engaging Californians in the transformation efforts of San Quentin and CDCR, ultimately to build sustainable support for people who are incarcerated and returning home.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- IO.1** Establish a Program Management Team
- IO.2** Establish a fund and pathways for nonprofit, community-based organizations to provide services
- IO.3** Explore innovative funding sources within and beyond state government
- IO.4** Enable ongoing impact evaluation, measurement, and iteration
- IO.5** Continue to share the rehabilitative power of San Quentin's residents with the public
- IO.6** Establish advisory boards to support San Quentin transformation efforts



## Recommendation 10.1— Establish a Program Management Team

While the San Quentin Transformation Advisory Council has created the above recommendations, each of these recommendations is composed of multiple projects. Determining which of these recommendations to follow, and developing an implementation plan for broad transformation of San Quentin to a “California Model of Rehabilitation” has inherent uncertainty around resource availability, risks, and shifting priorities. It will require formal program management to ensure the vision continues to be aligned with these uncertainties and shifting priorities.

The Advisory Council recommends creating a San Quentin Transformation program management team with the following responsibilities:

- Define project scope and funding
- Recruit and allocate subject matter experts for working groups and Advisory Boards
- Plan and implement project
- Identify vendors and CBO partners in partnership with the new Associate Warden of Programs
- Define evaluation metrics and oversee evaluation of transformation

This program management team must be set up to optimize communication within the discrete projects and a communication plan for external stakeholders—the community, prison staff, CBO-led programming staff, volunteers, residents, and local/state constituents.

### ACTION ITEMS

Create a program management team comprised of both CDCR and external members to manage and prioritize the various projects required for San Quentin’s transformation.

Establish an external San Quentin Transformation governance body to provide input, problem solve, and ensure that recommendations are implemented and rolled out within budget and timeline.

Establish rigorous, transparent, and inclusive processes to identify partner organizations and vendors to carry through the recommendations.

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- External organizations may need to be vetted prior to engagement in case they have conflicts of interest or competing interests that are not in service of rehabilitation.
- Care should be taken when developing a bid process for organizations that will carry out recommendations so that smaller, nonprofit CBOs with less capacity do not get boxed out of the opportunities to bid.

## Recommendation 10.2— Establish a fund and pathways for nonprofit, community-based organizations to provide services

Many successful programs at San Quentin are run by nonprofit/community-based organizations that also provide critical links to networks, resources, and services in the community. These organizations are often staffed — at least in part — by formerly incarcerated and/or system-impacted people who understand what is required to rehabilitate and successfully re-enter the community. They are critical to the San Quentin transformation effort.

Although CBOs deliver crucial rehabilitative programming, many report having an inconsistent experience with the department in terms of communication and understanding its policies and procedures. It is also easy for smaller organizations to get boxed out of providing important services to residents.

In 2022, the DRP (CDCR's Department of Rehabilitative Programs) offered [Innovative Programming Grant Awards](#), which helped stabilize programs with a proven track record in CDCR and helped many programs scale. Clear communication and consistent funding is critical to maintaining and growing these CDCR partnerships.

To expand coordination between CBOs and secure philanthropic partners, government agencies often partner with nonprofit, third-party administrators. These partners help secure philanthropic funding, provide technical assistance to CBOs, and improve communication and quality assurance across the network. Examples include [Ready to Rise](#) (a partnership between California Community Foundation, Liberty Hill Foundation and the Los Angeles County Probation Department) and [Community Economic Initiative](#) (a partnership between Sierra Health Foundation, California Endowment, Blue Shield Foundation, UCSC, and USC). CDCR/DRP can employ this model to effectively mobilize and provide philanthropic funds and infrastructure support to CBOs of varying sizes, blend funding, and improve quality assurance.

"CBOs are a personal connection to the outside world. They are the special sauce. They make it clear: you are not disposable, you are not lost, and I care about you. That transforms lives."

—CDCR LEADER



## ACTION ITEMS

Continue funding the DRP's Innovative Programming Grant Awards.

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Dedicate a portion of the Innovative Programming Grant Awards Fund to allocate to a network of San Quentin rehabilitative CBOs. Partner with a nonprofit, third-party administrator to secure philanthropic funding, provide technical assistance to CBOs, and improve coordination/quality assurance throughout the network. Provide funding for external evaluation to enhance programming's evidence base and measure collective impact.

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Ensure close partnership between DRP, intermediary organization, and Office of the Associate Warden of Programs at San Quentin to maximize communication, efficiency, and quality assurance.

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Identify partnerships to match and grow these partnership funds through other government departments in a all-of-government approach (e.g., CA workforce development board), philanthropy, public funding, and other public-private partnerships.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Carving out a portion of the Innovative Programming Grant Awards Fund to pilot this structure can be replicated across other institutions and facilities. See [Recommendation 4.2](#) for ways to optimize relationships between CBOs and San Quentin's Office of the Associate Warden of Programs.

# Case Study

## Community Economic Mobility Initiative



Small community-based organizations often struggle to get access to federal, state and philanthropic funding, as they often lack the staffing and capacity to get funding directly from government agencies. However, the participation of small community-based organizations at San Quentin is essential and promotes equity. Also, blended funding from philanthropic partners, alongside government agencies, increases impact and coordination across these actors.

There is a model that already exists that enables smaller community-based organizations to efficiently get funding, coordinate efforts, and get capacity-building support with the help of third-party administrators and technical assistance providers. These partners provide technical assistance, including the measurement and evaluation of the efficacy of the programs; and they coordinate between these smaller organizations and CDCR.

One such example is the Community Economic Mobilization Initiative (CEMI), which is a partnership between foundations (including The James Irvine Foundation, Blue Shield of California Foundation, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, and The California Endowment); technical assistance partners (including UCSC and USC); and a third-party administrator (The Center at Sierra Health.) CEMI helps a network of smaller CBOs get set up to receive funding from the American Rescue Plan, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and Community Economic Resilience Fund. And in turn, it provides funding and technical assistance to economic development community-based organizations.

The Center at Sierra Health states, "... these organizations must pivot to meet new federal and state community engagement requirements. History has shown that quick economic development results in limited and inequitable participation. Communities that are under-resourced and home to vulnerable and marginalized populations usually do not influence the process or benefit from the investments."

## Recommendation 10.3— Explore innovative funding sources within and beyond state government

Improving public safety through a rehabilitation and reentry focused experience requires working with a diverse set of external partners who may not traditionally work with prisons. Partners could include, but are not limited to, universities, philanthropy, CBOs, technology platforms, corporate entities, and architecture firms.

Some of these partners may be new to working with San Quentin, CDCR or DRP (CDCR's Division of Rehabilitative Programs) and require different types of funding. San Quentin needs to explore new and innovative ways of sourcing and funding this expanded set of partners in ways that are fair, transparent, and cost effective, and do not default to expanding CDCR's budget.

### ACTION ITEMS

Bring together philanthropic organizations to review this report and identify initiatives (for example, see [Recommendation 4.5](#) for the resident incubator program, or [Recommendation 5.3](#) for expanding restorative justice programming, or [Recommendation 6.1](#) for programming to connect those who are incarcerated with their families) that would be ripe for non-governmental financial support.

Identify areas where CDCR could reallocate a defined percentage of its budget toward transformation efforts and consider philanthropic fund matching as an incentive.

*Example:* In Newark, [The Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery \(OVPTR\)](#)<sup>73</sup> distributes grants to key priorities of reducing violence and diversion programs. The Mayor and City Council have allocated 5% of the Public Safety budget to fund the new OVPTR. The OVPTR and the Newark Police Department work in partnership to develop public safety solutions for the city.

Take an all-of-government approach to identify funding streams from other state departments like the Department of Education, Department of Labor, etc. that could be allocated to this initiative.

Develop strategic public-private partnerships with nonprofit organizations and the corporate sector who can leverage their financial resources and employee volunteer programs to help fund and operate programs.

## Recommendation 10.4— Enable ongoing impact evaluation, measurement, and iteration

Establishing a baseline is a critical foundation on which all transformation and improvement efforts are built; it is the process of establishing a standard or point of reference against which future performance can be measured.

In the case of San Quentin, a baseline should be used to compare future performance against past and current performance. This can help identify those solutions that are performing well and those solutions which need adjustments and/or improvements.

Evaluation should assess impact on staff, residents, and families, and also assess metrics beyond recidivism, such as readiness for release, waiting lists for programming, quality of life, violence reduction, and more. Metrics should be measurable, attainable, meaningful, and aligned with the overall goals of the program.

An external research partner should start partnering with the CDCR Office of Research to collect data about metrics for success as soon as possible to establish a baseline and to determine a thoughtful and rigorous prospective evaluation strategy of San Quentin's transformation to a rehabilitation center.

### ACTION ITEMS

Establish a public/private partnership between CDCR's Office of Research and philanthropy and state university faculty (for example, at a UC and/or CSU campus) to establish a baseline and evaluate the broader San Quentin Transformation effort.



## Recommendation 10.5— Continue to share the power of rehabilitation with the public

San Quentin has historically pushed the public's imagination about transformation that is possible for people who are incarcerated and reinforce their humanity. The people inside and those who successfully reenter society are the evidence that rehabilitation is possible.

Public information efforts provide windows into the programs, services, and outcomes at San Quentin. They also build the public's support for improving basic living conditions and rehabilitative programming within prisons. They can also help to destigmatize citizens when they come home.

“People come to San Quentin, and it changes their minds about people in prisons. They see Shakespeare. They see coders. They see people transforming their lives. They see redemption and change is possible.”

—CBO LEADER

Yet community return is plagued with barriers to reintegration. Formerly incarcerated people in California face over [4,800 laws that impose collateral consequences for a conviction](#).<sup>74</sup> These barriers hinder progress to successful reentry and public safety, limiting the impact of people's transformation. Many formerly incarcerated people are leading the change to remove these barriers, and San Quentin has an opportunity to support these efforts.

### ACTION ITEMS

Continue partnerships with the Public Information Office and community groups to bring stakeholders inside San Quentin, including elected officials, criminal justice policy makers, community leaders, victim/survivor groups, and the press.

Share progress of the San Quentin transformation effort with the public. Offer transparency into the initiative's momentum and learnings for what is required to provide a truly rehabilitative environment.

Support efforts that demonstrate success of people reintegrating home and highlight the additional barriers formerly incarcerated people face even after having done extensive rehabilitative work.

Continue to allow access to press, artists, and CBOs to help people who are incarcerated tell and disseminate their own stories to demonstrate the power and potential of rehabilitative programming and transformative change. Share these opportunities and the resulting stories at San Quentin, across CDCR facilities, and throughout California.

*Example:* [26.2 to Life](#) is a documentary about the 1,000 Mile Running Club in San Quentin. The film was distributed across the country and throughout CDCR facilities.

*Example:* [Pollen Initiative](#) is dedicated to cultivating media centers inside prisons and jails across the U.S., including the San Quentin News. Their mission is “to equip incarcerated people with multimedia skills — including written, audio and visual journalism — to share stories that change lives, inform policy and narratives and build communities.”

## Recommendation 10.6— Establish advisory boards to support San Quentin transformation efforts

The recommendations outlined in this report span many different domains and expertise—policy, infrastructure, technology, healthcare, programming, architecture, and more. In order to deliver on this wide range of initiatives, the individuals and teams engaged in the implementation process must be multidisciplinary and represent relevant perspectives.

Each advisory board, listed below, should have representation from communities proximate to the lived experience of San Quentin residents and include current residents, as well as relevant subject matter experts.

Advisory Board members should receive a clear understanding of their mandate, scope of influence, and incentives for their time commitment.

We recommend CDCR consider establishing advisory boards on the following topics: **Rehabilitative Programming** (to support programming offer, evaluation, quality assurance), **Housing and Facilities** (to support ongoing design and development of capital projects and to consider the opportunity - and potential drawbacks - to establishing an MCRP on San Quentin land), **Workforce Development** (to seek out and ensure ethical, equitable employment in prison and develop opportunities that provide post-release jobs in communities), and **California Model** (to support ongoing development and implementation of the model across facilities).

These boards should partner with existing advisory boards in the community to increase efficacy and coordination. (e.g., coordination with City/County/State Workforce Investment Boards and existing resident advisory boards within San Quentin).



# Building 38 Considerations

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## OBJECTIVE

The old Prison Industry Building (PIA or Building 38) has a budget and the design teams hired by CDCR are already well underway in designing the space.

This Advisory Council came together in August and did an exercise to brainstorming ideas for the building. This section shows the results of those conversations. The Advisory Council does not have the authority to make decisions about the redesign of Building 38, but in September 2023, we offered the following ideas to the firm hired by CDCR to consider in its design process.

# More space creates more opportunities for rehabilitative programming.

## THE CHALLENGE

The Advisory Council believes the transformation of the old Prison Industry Building (PIA or Building 38) is the beginning of San Quentin's transformation, not the end. A single building site alone will not transform San Quentin into a rehabilitation center.

The funding for Building 38 has already been proposed by the Governor and approved by the Legislature with an [appropriation of \\$360 million](#). The Council believes strongly that the \$360 million appropriation for Building 38 should be reduced substantially — by at least one third — and the remainder of the budget should be redirected to the other priority capital projects recommended by the Council in this report (e.g., store, café, town square, family visitation areas, housing improvements).

The following pages of this section outline the Council's ideas for how best to utilize the space and principles that should inform its design.

While we believe Building 38 can be the catalyst for San Quentin's transformation into a rehabilitation center, the decision to build a new building, and the specific design of the building is outside of our purview. The design is the responsibility of the Design Build Entities (DBE) hired by the CDCR.

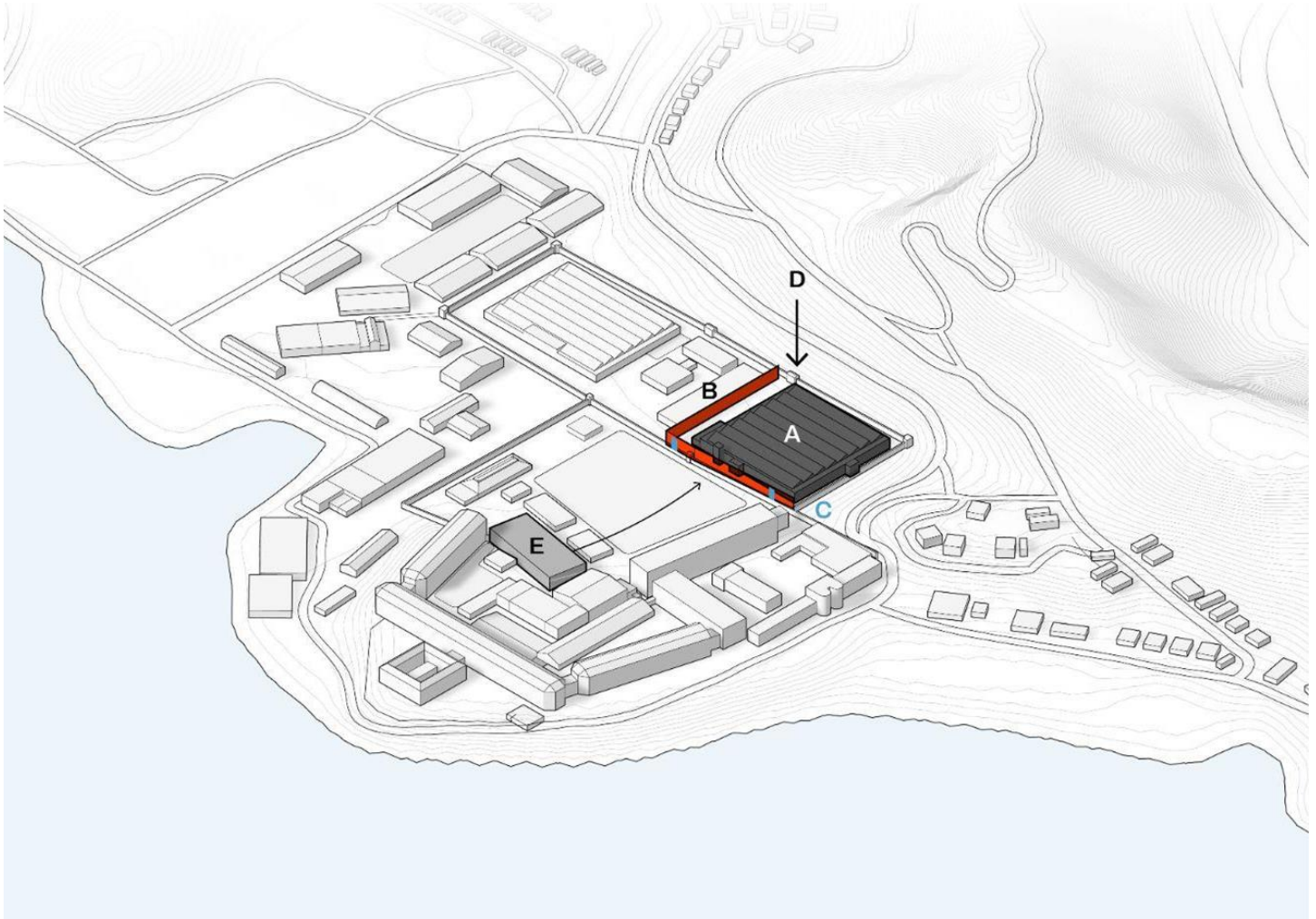
We offer these considerations as ideas to help inform the design of Building 38. We have recommended the DBE take these ideas as an initial input and complete its essential due diligence with key stakeholders as a part of its comprehensive design process.



This is an aerial view of Building 38, before it is torn down and replaced. (Photo courtesy of CDCR)



# Building 38 Considerations



## MAP LEGEND

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| A | Building 38   |
| B | Build New Wall Here   |
| C | Create Open Walkways in Existing Wall                                   |
| D | Create New Site Entrance Here   |
| E | Current Location of Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT) |

# Building 38

## Considerations

These were ideas brainstormed by the Advisory Council, and then shared with the Design Build Entity that was hired by CDCR for Building 38. The ideas were given in September 2023 (months before this report was written.) The comprehensive design of Building 38 is beyond the mandate and authority of the Advisory Council.

### LEARNING SPACES

- **Flexible classrooms** for up to 30 students, and for use across multiple educational groups and programs, especially at the college or education level.
- **Purpose-built learning spaces** dedicated to specific needs / uses infrastructure (e.g., high power / data needs; specific machinery).
- For instance, the media center should have spaces that replicate real world A/V working situations
- **Library and Reading Room with Study Space.** Move existing reading materials and create a spacious and purpose built library; incorporate a [Freedom Library](#); create a reading room for use by all residents for reading, study or other quiet activity. Open during all programming hours — like a college campus library.
- **Space for Staff** to opt into college level courses (aka additional headcount).

### ASSEMBLY AND FLEX SPACES

- **Auditorium / Assembly space.** For presentations and for special occasions like graduation, etc.
- **Student Union.** A convening space that can be used for individual or small group studying
- **Conference Rooms** for video calls and hybrid meetings, for students, prison staff and CBO-led program staff, especially for use in connection to core learning programming (e.g., a class running a hybrid workshop)
- **Flexible Open Working** environment with drop-in desk space, power and tech to accommodate ad hoc usage

### REHABILITATION SPACES

- **Reentry Resources Center** (proximate to other spaces frequently accessed by CBO-led programming staff)
- **Behavioral health programming and services,** expanded
- **Move ISUDT out of the gym.** Needs: well designed, offices for facilitators, classroom space.

### DEDICATED SPACES FOR PRISON STAFF AND CBO-LED PROGRAM STAFF

- **Space for prison staff and CBO-led Program staff** to take a break, recharge, socialize, work independently. Particular needs include:
- **Lounge.** Social space away from residents to connect, discuss work matters and share community.
- **Resources Center.** A ‘teacher’s lounge’ with printers, copiers, classroom tech, and space to prep work.
- **Secure Storage.** Lockers or other temporary space for securely storing personal belongings.
- **Small Group Training Room.** A small-medium sized training space(s) for prison staff and CBO-led program staff to engage in training, onboarding, or other small group convening

### NORMALIZED SOCIAL SPACES FOR STAFF AND RESIDENTS

- **Sports Lounge.** Sports are a shared bond the culture. This was recommended by the incarcerated population. Consider: We could also imagine this being integrated into a new gym if space permitted.
- **Café.** Staffed by trained residents (leads to work skills). Different feel from the Sports Lounge; cozier, quieter.
- **Grocery Store / Farmer’s Market.** A true grocery space for residents to purchase their own fresh food items. Ideally also toiletries / household items, in addition to a ~weekly onsite farmer’s market run by local producers.
- **Additional flexible use** community space for ad hoc community usage purposes

# Building 38

## Considerations

### OPEN GREEN SPACE

- Whether a singular 'quad' or a series of gardens, there should be ample green space including: shaded outdoor tables and seating, spaces for outdoor studying/reading, space for gardening.

### CREATE NEW SITE ENTRANCE (C)

- Repurpose the construction sally port to create a permanent manned visitor's pedestrian access. There is a big design opportunity for this new entrance— Consider varied perspectives, especially of family, CBO-led staff, volunteers and other visitors coming and going, and what might be both functionally and experientially uplifting for them.

### INSTALL ROBUST DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Classrooms and training spaces should be equipped with comprehensive digital infrastructure to support hybrid learning in all classrooms and training spaces. This will:
- Introduce normalized settings for learning and professional work (e.g., laptops, wifi, digital whiteboards).
- Design as much as possible to be prepared for future pandemics or other emergent situations that might otherwise disrupt learning.

### OPEN ACCESS TO THIS SITE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

- **Open access and views in.** Currently this site is not visible from the broader SQ campus, and is behind a high wall. Create puncture openings in the existing wall to allow for this, and create a new wall (B) for work change security.
- **Use for all residents and staff.** Whether they are officially engaged in dedicated programming or not. Allow for any new classroom space that is created in Building 38 or elsewhere to also be used for staff education and training.
- **Visitor's access.** We imagine extending access to this building for visitors for special uses, like graduations, special events, and through reentry readiness programming.
- **Views out / Nature.** Is it possible to create views out from this location to the bay, Mount Tamalpais, the natural beauty beyond?

# Spatial design principles for Building 38 and campus-wide improvements

## DESIGN FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

Improve the baseline living, working and learning conditions to meet basic health and safety requirements and to increase access to more residents. Specifically:

- Improve HVAC and other building systems campus wide, especially as preparedness to mitigate risk during future health crises.
- Improve ADA accessibility across the campus to increase access to more residents.

## DESIGN FOR DIGNITY

Apply principles of “normalization” to make life in prison more like life outside, and improve moral conditions by applying a more domestic and humane approach to the design of living, learning and socializing spaces.

## DESIGN FOR HEALING AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Use art and natural materials to support individual reflection, gathering, and relationship-building between residents and with staff.

- When building a new or refreshing existing spaces, create opportunities for residents and staff to create art, murals, installations, etc. These are most impactful when experts / professionals are brought in to teach methods and work side-by-side with residents/staff.

## DESIGN FOR GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Set a tone of learning, potential, and reinvention through aspirational, flexible, technology-enabled spaces.



# Appendices

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## APPENDIX A

### ADVISORY COUNCIL'S MANDATE

The Advisory Council, [named by Governor Newsom on May 5, 2023](#),<sup>75</sup> was tasked with giving recommendations “to transform San Quentin State Prison by 2025 into a one-of-a-kind rehabilitation center focused on improving public safety through rehabilitation and education.”

Governor Newsom said, “Through their time and talent, these leaders will help us build a scalable model across California that will advance justice, safer communities, and true rehabilitation.”

Thus, this report primarily focuses on recommendations for ways to transform San Quentin into a rehabilitation center. It also includes some references to changes that might be considered throughout the state’s other prisons.

Many decisions were beyond the Advisory Council’s scope: The building of a new Building 38 at San Quentin, Building 38’s budget, final scope, architectural firm selection, design process and final design decisions, as well as development and clarification of “The California Model.” Additionally, the Council did not have the resourcing nor the authority to create detailed implementation plans, costing, or operational models. [Section 10](#) does, however, outline ideas about a path forward for the recommendations, through ongoing community engagement in San Quentin’s transformation.

The report puts forth recommendations that were primarily based on the ideas of Advisory Council members but that also drew on conversations Advisory Council Members had with people in the community, including people who are currently incarcerated at San Quentin and San Quentin staff. In the areas where Council Members had differing opinions, the Co-Chairs endeavored to incorporate these alternate perspectives into the report and noted one particular area of disagreement related to building an MCRP on San Quentin land.

It should be noted that while the Advisory Council Members and Co-Chairs offered a broad and diverse set of perspectives from both within and outside the existing San Quentin experience, only some on the Advisory Council Members currently work or have worked at San Quentin or were previously incarcerated there.

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## APPENDIX A

### ADVISORY COUNCIL'S PROCESS

Governor Newsom convened the San Quentin Transformation Advisory Council to include the expertise of established criminal justice, public safety, healthcare, academic, reentry, and rehabilitation professionals, along with system-impacted/formerly incarcerated community leaders, and representatives of crime victims/survivors.

The Advisory Council Co-Chairs endeavored to include many perspectives in this report, rather than submit a report in which every point gained full consensus. This included the perspectives and ideas of Advisory Council members as well as the many people interviewed by Advisory Council members in one-on-one or group settings - including San Quentin staff and people currently incarcerated at San Quentin. While the members of the Advisory Council may have had some different perspectives and areas of focus, we are all united in the common belief that people who are in prison must be supported to successfully reenter society as a means of improving public safety and positive outcomes for generations to come.

The Advisory Council was chaired by Dr. Brie Williams (Professor of Medicine at the University of California San Francisco and Director of Amend at UCSF), Doug Bond (Amity President and CEO), Ronald Broomfield (former Warden of San Quentin) and Mayor Darrell Steinberg of Sacramento (the Governor's Lead Advisor on this effort.)

The Advisory Council members participated in a collaborative process developed and facilitated by IDEO to gather their ideas — and the ideas of others not on the Advisory Council — for this report. The Co-Chairs are the lead authors of this report. Their writing was informed by the meaningful and generous participation, language from, and input and feedback of the Advisory Council Members through a series of activities, led by IDEO.

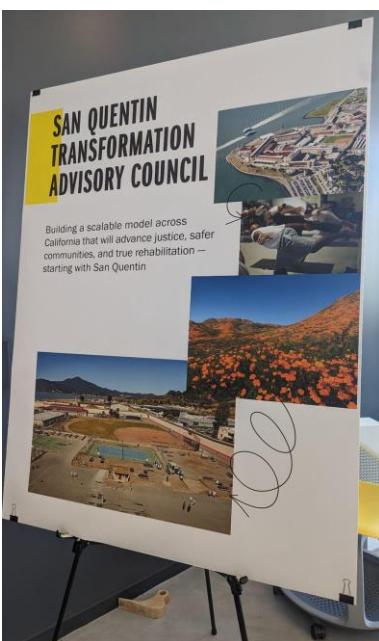
These activities included 4 all-day workshops with the full Advisory Council. Each Council Member also joined at least one subcommittee focused on various dimensions of the future vision. The subcommittees met over 12 weeks and reported their recommendations to the broader Advisory Council, Co-Chairs, and IDEO.

IDEO conducted individual interviews and held check-ins with Council members to gather their input to inform the recommendations. Each Advisory Council member also was asked to speak with, and record feedback from, no fewer than five people at San Quentin or in affected communities and to share this feedback with IDEO. IDEO integrated this information and feedback into this report.

IDEO ran nearly weekly Zoom meetings for Council members to check-in and to address various topics from June until November 2023. A draft of each section was reviewed by the Advisory Council members and another 1:1 interview was done with IDEO to get more feedback from council members. IDEO organized information sharing and feedback sessions between Co-Chair representatives and various stakeholder groups (both at San Quentin and in the community), including victim/survivor groups, labor unions, and advocacy organizations. These perspectives were also brought into the report.

IDEO's role has been to facilitate input-gathering, assist with incorporating many viewpoints into the writing of the report, and finalize the formatting and graphic design of the report. IDEO has not played leadership, decision-making, or public engagement roles.





Moments from the Advisory Council's in-person meetings. (Photos Courtesy of IDEO)



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## APPENDIX A

### LISTENING SESSIONS

Research activities also included visits to San Quentin to speak with and facilitate conversations with:

- San Quentin residents (100+) including the Citizens/Inmate Advisory Council, focus groups with Spanish-speaking residents, former gang members, ACT (LGBTQIA+), Voices Heal, People in Blue, San Quentin Citizens Advisory Council
- San Quentin staff (100+) including interviews with numerous officers
- San Quentin staff and residents together
- Current participants and staff at Amistad (MCRP) and Beacon (former lifer) campuses (many who were previously incarcerated at San Quentin)

We also conducted listening sessions with external stakeholders, including victim/survivor groups.

### DISCLOSURE

The Advisory Council was established by the Governor's Office to include subject matter experts in rehabilitation from different perspectives. The Co-Chairs and IDEO leaned heavily on the Council Members' expertise and professional relationships to also identify and integrate the expertise of others into this report. Given the specialized expertise of the Council members, our recommendations at times point to programs those on the Council have developed, participate in and/or direct. We cumulatively spent hundreds of hours in consultation with incarcerated people, staff, community leaders, and other experts, and evaluating evidence-based practices from the U.S. and abroad. We also worked to create a report that is comprehensive, evidence-based (where possible), and that captures ideas of people affected by the criminal legal system beyond those appointed to this Council.

When the Advisory Council was named, Ron Broomfield was the Warden of San Quentin (since 2021). In August 2023, Mr. Broomfield was appointed Director of Division of Adult Institutions at CDCR. He continued to serve as a Co-Chair of this Council, providing deep expertise from his prior role as Warden. The recommendations and personal opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of CDCR. Nor do they necessarily reflect the views of IDEO, University of California San Francisco or the other institutions to which Advisory Council Members belong. As mentioned previously, Advisory Council Co-Chairs opted to include many suggestions and perspectives in this report, rather than submit a report in which every point gained full consensus.

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# Advisory Council

## ADVISORY COUNCIL CO-CHAIRS

Brie Williams, Professor of Medicine at the University of California San Francisco, Director and Founder of Amend at UCSF

Doug Bond, President and CEO, Amity Foundation

Ronald Broomfield, Director of Adult Institutions, CDCR (former Warden of San Quentin)

## LEAD ADVISOR TO THE GOVERNOR

Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg

## ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Scott Budnick, Founder, Anti-Recidivism Coalition

Neil Flood, State Vice President, California Correctional Peace Officers Association

Tinisch Hollins, Executive Director, Californians for Safety and Justice

Katie James, Chief, CDCR's Office of Victim and Survivor Rights and Services

Ayanna Lalia Kiburi, Deputy Director, California Arts Council

Terah Lawyer-Harper, Executive Director, Creating Restorative Opportunities and Programs

Kenyatta Leal, Executive Director, Next Chapter Project

Jody Lewen, President, Mount Tamalpais College

Sam Lewis, Executive Director, Anti-Recidivism Coalition

Billie Mizell, Founder, ALIGHT Justice; Chair Emeritus, Insight Prison Project; Adjunct Professor and Director of the Transformative Justice Prison Project of Santa Clara University School of Law

Jonathan Moscone, Former Executive Director, California Arts Council

U.S. Marine Corps Major General James Michael Myatt (ret.)

Alison Pachynski, Chief Medical Executive, San Quentin State Prison

Chris Redlitz, Executive Director, The Last Mile

Michael Romano, Director and Founder, Three Strikes Project at Stanford University

Mimi Silbert, President and CEO, Delancey Street

Jesse Vasquez, Executive Director, Pollen Initiative

## APPENDIX B

# Cell Sizes at San Quentin Compared to the Modern Codes

## CURRENT CELL MEASUREMENTS AT SAN QUENTIN<sup>76</sup>

- North Block 4' 6" X 10' 11" (double cell)
- West Block 4' 6" X 11' 3" (double cell)
- East Block 4' 6" X 11' 3" (single cell)
- South Block 4' 8" X 11' (partial double cell)
- Adjustment Center 6' 6" X 7' (single cell)

## CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE TODAY<sup>77</sup>

- 1231.2.7 Double-occupancy cells. Double-occupancy cells shall: 1. Have a maximum capacity of two residents; 2. Contain a minimum of 60 square feet (5.6 m<sup>2</sup>) of floor area in Type I facilities and 70 square feet (6.5 m<sup>2</sup>) of floor area in Type II and Type III facilities; 3. Have a minimum clear ceiling height of 8 feet (2438 mm) and a minimum width of 6 feet (1829 mm); 4. Contain a toilet, wash basin and drinking fountain as specified in Section 1231.3; and 5. Contain two bunks, and at least one desk and seat as specified in Section 1231.3. Exception: A Type I facility does not require a desk and seat.”

## AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDATION FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION<sup>78</sup>

- “Multiple-Occupancy Rooms/Cells (Size): 1-CORE-1A-07 (Existing, Revocation, Addition, New Construction) Ref. 4-ALDF-1A-10 — Multiple-occupancy rooms/cells house between two and sixty-four occupants and provide 25 square feet of unencumbered space per occupant.

## APPENDIX C

# The potential future of East Block and the Lethal Injection Chamber

Prior to the Advisory Committee's formation, it was decided that the residents of East Block, those who have been sentenced to death, [are to be transferred to other facilities by the end of 2024](#).<sup>79</sup> This move will leave 528 single-person cells vacant in East Block.

The Advisory Council recommends permanently shutting down “death row” and evaluating options to replace the current housing unit with modular housing or improved living spaces that are more conducive to rehabilitation.

**We believe we must improve living conditions across San Quentin to house people humanely. This process can start with East Block due to the shift in population.**

There are a few options to consider if updating and reopening East Block, including:

1. **Retrofit East Block:** rehabilitate the rooms for a mix of improved housing units and appropriate day-use common spaces such as kitchens, study, living room, to promote rehabilitation in the space.
2. **Tear down and rebuild East Block:** pilot new, cost effective, modular housing that meets present day institutional living standards (in terms of ventilation, noise reduction, privacy).

These efforts should be part of a larger, longer-term effort to provide more dignified housing throughout San Quentin.

*Example:* [Urban Awning](#), a program run by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters Training Center that builds housing units to address the affordable housing crisis in California. They also provide an opportunity for on-the-job training for new carpenters and apprentices to gain valuable job skills for carpenter union positions.

Other infrastructure related to “death row” includes the lethal injection chamber. Similar to East Block, we recommend that CDCR initiate a design process to identify options for this space. The Advisory Council offered a few starting points for this space:

- (1) Demolish the chamber, to ensure the space is not used for lethal injection again. Create an open, healing space in its stead (e.g., a community garden)
- (2) Preserve the chamber to memorialize the space and to ensure Californians do not forget this history. Plan programming in the space (e.g., events, exhibitions) with incarcerated people, formerly incarcerated people, and local CBOs/artists to foster dialogue about the way forward and progress in our criminal legal system.





## APPENDIX D

# Training of Staff and Specialized Community Correctional Officer Role

CDCR is partnering with the University of California San Francisco to create an introduction for all CDCR staff in the California Model (this training program is being developed by an organization founded by one of the co-chairs of this Advisory Committee). We recommend CDCR consider partnering with the University of California (UC), and the California State University (CSU) systems or other institutions of higher learning to expand other educational opportunities to CDCR staff as well. In particular, CDCR should build on its existing partnership efforts with UC and CSU systems that are extending more opportunities for incarcerated people to gain university credits with the goal of developing a more in-depth, college-credit bearing program for correctional officers.

The first such college credit series of courses should be training for the proposed “community correctional officer” (a model which could be scaled statewide). UC and CSU should collaborate to offer these educational credits on different platforms, many can be remote, some in person, and some hybrid.

This training to become a Community Correctional Officer should be considered part of a staff development, benefit and retention package. It should create a pathway for staff to advance their careers (e.g., resulting in college credits that facilitate their applications to become a correctional counselors or captains) and should confer a certificate, designation or be applicable toward a college degree.

## STAFF INCENTIVES

We encourage CDCR and bargaining units (including CCPOA and SEIU) to identify non-financial and financial incentives for staff to opt into taking on a trained community correctional officer role. This staff role should be designed to enhance the ease with which correctional staff do their work and the efficiency with which they do it. Evidence from other prison systems suggest that the duties it entails will increase job satisfaction and personal well being, and can therefore be considered a “win / win” for the CDCR and custody staff.

Examples of additional staff incentives to taking on this new designation could include, but are not limited to:

- First priority on vacation bid
- Tie to retention pay

## ENSURE SINCERE PEER-LED TRAINING INITIATIVE

Part of the training to be a community correctional officer should also include preparation for becoming a peer trainer for other prison staff in the CA Model and the fundamental approach of San Quentin that will be to provide and focus on rehabilitation from day 1 of incarceration. Staff should be selected for training roles based on objective assessments of their alignment with the new professional approach at San Quentin that will be focused on rehabilitation and mentorship.

All staff should have an opportunity to participate in peer-led training initiatives.

## APPENDIX E

**EXAMPLE: JOB DESCRIPTION FOR COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL OFFICER (CCO)**

Community Correctional Officers will have the privilege, responsibility, and training to work directly with residents to set rehabilitative goals, make plans, and engage in professional conversations about gaining reentry skills. Hiring for the role will prioritize emotional intelligence, ability to develop professional relationships with residents, eagerness to engage in training on harm-reduction and trauma-informed approaches, and demonstrated ability to counsel toward successful reentry and improved public safety.

New responsibilities and considerations could include:

- Advise other staff (as peer mentors) around difficult interactions and resolving interpersonal conflicts with residents or other staff.
- Be trained to become integrated into residents' Rehabilitation Teams and use this position to ensure other custody staff understand the focus on rehabilitation at the facility.
- Become a resource throughout the rehabilitation center or different housing units for residents who are interested in starting new programs, find new programming opportunities, or engage in conversations about rehabilitation.
- Become the liaison for short off-site programming opportunities for small groups of residents such as to engage in community service around state park trail maintenance (this opportunity does not yet exist, so is more aspirational)
- Meet with formerly incarcerated people after their return to the community to understand how San Quentin can optimize readiness for release.
- Become trained to support delivery of vocational instruction alongside community based organization-led programs. This is especially relevant for those staff who have expertise in vocational fields such as carpentry, welding, plumbing. This is not intended as a way to supplant CBOs or resident-led programs. Officers would not develop the methodology or instruction plan, nor would they be the primary or sole program lead. Rather, the goal would be to support building of professional interactions with residents if and when officers are present.
- Utilize tools to log and measure new practices and their impact on rehabilitation

**EXAMPLE: POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL OFFICER TRAINING PROGRAM**

Basic introduction to:

- The traumatic life experiences and ACEs that have been commonly experienced by people incarcerated in California
- The Science of Behavior Change and how staff can support this process
- Substance use disorder treatment
- The role of peer mentors for residents at San Quentin
- Mental health and mental illness
- Neurodiversity and learning differences
- Anger management

Practical knowledge:

- Familiarity with local CBOs and resources available in the prison and upon release for people incarcerated at San Quentin to help connect residents to more opportunities
- Understand the parole process
- Become familiar with the difficulties associated with reentry (by meeting with people who are formerly incarcerated as mentors and guides in this knowledge acquisition)
- Information about the prevailing culture of — and opportunities at — other CDCR facilities to better counsel residents who will be transferred or to better understand experiences of those who have recently arrived at San Quentin from elsewhere
- Successful approaches to working in multidisciplinary teams
- Engaging in health and wellness for prison staff
- Leading others in prison-based culture change
- The impact of isolation in prison on mental and physical health
- Motivational Interviewing
- How to train others in the Public Health Principles of the California Model

# Acknowledgements

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## About the photographer: Vincent O'Bannon

The photographs in this report (unless otherwise credited) were captured by Vincent O'Bannon, an incarcerated photographer for the San Quentin News.

Vincent says, "Every photo captures the hope found at San Quentin. From flowers growing in the cement, to the palm trees against the clear blue sky — this place provides hope to so many of us. It is where I have found my voice through photography. And yet, we are still incarcerated. I hope to return to my family one day soon."

Vincent's interest in photography began in high school, however, challenges in his life redirected his life path. He didn't return to photography until the birth of his first grandchild in 1988. Unfortunately, a subsequent incarceration shuttered his passion.

Nearly two decades later, through training in journalism, Vincent was inspired to pick up the camera again. After joining San Quentin's Media Center, he became a member, and subsequently Chairman, of the San Quentin Chapter of the Northern California Society of Professional Journalists. There, he received professional development under the tutelage of several independent photographers and video journalists.

Vincent is also a facilitator for San Quentin's Awareness Into Domestic Abuse (AIDA) Program, and he and his daughter started a truck driver training program at San Quentin.





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