

Uncuffed and Unemployed: There is Work to be Done

May 15, 2025

SUMMARY

The cuffs come off when jail time is done, but they could go back on quickly if reentry into society does not include a job. Professional, coordinated employment assistance can be the difference between successful reintegration and a revolving door back to jail.

Law enforcement agencies arrest and detain about 7,100 people in the Marin County Jail (County Jail) every year.¹ Some stay just long enough to be booked and released, while others remain in custody for years. With a total bed capacity of 325, the average occupancy is about 250 incarcerated persons (IPs) on any given day.²

Learning that roughly 440 individuals are released back into Marin County (the County) every month, the Marin County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) investigated how IPs are helped to become ready for employment after incarceration. The advantages to the County of preparing incarcerated people for the job market are significant. The ability to support themselves generates dignity and a sense of purpose, contributes to family and society, and has a lower likelihood of returning to criminal activity. Each person released who does not return to jail represents a potential yearly savings to the County of \$133,000, the average annual cost of incarceration per inmate.³

County government attention directed at improving job readiness of incarcerated people makes sense. A steady job is critical to avoiding a costly return to jail. Although the Grand Jury found that there are hardworking professionals inside and outside the jail who provide some assistance, the current process fails to coordinate their efforts and resources. The Grand Jury heard from the newly released, and those who try to help them, that job-readiness is essential to successful reentry, but the County services currently provided miss the mark in producing actual employment results.

The Grand Jury finds there is limited coordination and communication among the County and non-profit employment support counselors and resources. There is also a lack of pre-release job

¹ “Marin County Jail Roster Lookup: How Do You Find Someone in the Marin County Jail,” *Jail Exchange: Marin County Jail*, <https://www.jailexchange.com/city-and-county-jails/california/marin-county/marin-county-jail>, (accessed 2/27/25).

² Public Booking Log County of Marin, <https://apps.marincounty.org/BookingLog/Booking/Action>, (accessed 3/14/25).

³ California Legislative Analyst’s Office, “How much Does it Cost to Incarcerate a Person? California’s Annual Average Cost to Incarcerate a Person: 2024-2025 Enacted Budget,” *The California Legislature’s Nonpartisan Fiscal and Policy Advisor*, https://lao.ca.gov/policyareas/cj/6_cj_inmatecost, (accessed 3/1/25).

readiness and employment counseling, and failure to track post-incarceration employment data that could be used to assess whether efforts are successful.

To make sure the County maximizes the resources already provided to previously incarcerated people in their job search, the Grand Jury has several recommendations. The most important is for the Marin County Board of Supervisors (BOS) to task a County office with the responsibility for formal coordination among all the County and non-profit employment support resources for the formerly incarcerated. The Grand Jury further recommends that the County collect, track, and analyze data to inform people how post-incarceration employment efforts meet goals.

BACKGROUND

County Jail is an underground facility near the Civic Center in which staff deal with complex incarceration and rehabilitation efforts. It was designed primarily for those awaiting trial and/or serving short sentences for misdemeanors. That composition changed in 2011 with California's Public Safety Realignment Act (AB109).⁴ This legislation scaled down an overcrowded state prison system by shifting responsibility for non-violent, non-serious, and non-sexual felony offenders from state prisons to county jails.⁵ Rather than being transferred to state prison, these offenders often remain in County Jail to serve their sentences for up to multiple years.

The Challenges of a Shifting Jail Composition

While AB109 eased overcrowding in prisons, it created new challenges for county jails. According to interviewees, some of the roughly 250 incarcerated people in Marin County Jail are classified under AB109. The addition of felony offenders is significant because their longer stays often equate to the need for enhanced in-custody programs and intensive reentry assistance upon release. Those types of services are more typically available in state prisons than in county jails.

To offset the extra cost imposed by these longer sentences and increased needs, the state kicks in funds to the County through each county's Community Corrections Partnership (CCP).⁶ The money is to be spent not only on incarceration but on efforts that reduce recidivism and promote reintegration into society.⁷

The Marin CCP is a multidisciplinary team with members such as the Sheriff, District Attorney, Public Defender, Probation Chief, a presiding judge, social services, and advisors from education, employment, and rehabilitation, among others. The aim is to plan, implement, and

⁴ AB 109 resulted in hundreds of amendments as well as some repeals of California statutes. A full list is included in the AB 109 Bill Text dated January 10, 2011, http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_0101-0150/ab_109_bill_20110404_chaptered.html, (accessed 3/25/25).

⁵ Mia Bird, Justin Goss, and Viet Nguyen, "Recidivism of Felony Offenders in California," *Public Policy Institute of California*, June 2019, p. 5, <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/recidivism-of-felony-offenders-in-california.pdf>, (accessed 2/20/25).

⁶ "AB109 Implementation The First Year," *California Mental Health Planning Council*, p. 3, https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Documents/AB%20109%20Imp%20Feb%202013_FINAL.pdf, (accessed 2/20/25).

⁷ "Impact of California AB109 on Criminal Justice System," *Legal Clarity*, December 25, 2024, <https://legalclarity.org/impact-of-california-ab-109-on-criminal-justice-system/>, (accessed 4/3/25).

assess evidence-based practices and programming that promote positive behavioral change and outcomes to reduce recidivism.

The Marin CCP receives about \$10 million each year from the state and maintains what it calls “rainy day reserves” of an additional \$10 million.⁸ The funding is used to underwrite the cost of detention in jail, plus reentry assistance such as housing, mental health and substance use treatment, and employment support.⁹ Notably, in 2023-24, the CCP spent \$272,191 (less than three percent of the budget) on employment.¹⁰

More Changes, More Adaptation

The make-up of the jail population changed again three years after the enactment of AB109. In 2014, Proposition 47 reclassified many theft and drug-related felonies to misdemeanors. These reduced sentences and the sizable cost savings were directed into crime-prevention and drug treatment programs. According to the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, “Prop 47 has saved the state \$816 million since its passage ... reduced recidivism rates, and improved employment opportunities and housing stability; all at a fraction of the total cost to incarcerate someone annually.”¹¹

That significant steady stream of savings may now be in jeopardy. In November 2024, California voters passed Proposition 36.¹² This repeals parts of Prop 47, increases penalties for certain crimes, and comes with mandates that are not always funded. For example, some felony offenders must be offered an option to complete drug treatment instead of a jail term, but those substance abuse programs are not necessarily paid for by the state.¹³

As a result of Prop 36, the number of people in jail is expected to increase, while Prop 47 cost savings are expected to dry up.¹⁴ If these predictions are correct, Marin will see more people completing sentences, reentering society, and needing help finding employment.

⁸ County of Marin, “Public Safety Realignment, Marin Community Corrections Partnership Annual Report and Plan Update,” 2023, p.6,

<https://www.bscc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Marin-Updated-CCP-Annual-Plan-23-24.pdf>, (accessed 2/27/25).

⁹ County of Marin, “Public Safety Realignment,” 2023, p. 6.

¹⁰ Samantha Klein, “Community Corrections Partnership Survey Marin,” December 12, 2023, p. 24

<https://www.bscc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Marin-County-FY-23-24-CCP-Survey-Part-A-Part-B.pdf>, (accessed 3/20/25).

¹¹ Grecia Reséndez, “Proposition 47 Delivers Nearly \$1 Billion to California Communities, *Center on Juvenile & Criminal Justice*, September 12, 2024, <https://www.cjci.org/reports-publications/report/proposition-47-delivers-nearly-1-billion-to-california-communities>, (accessed 2/20/25); also see A.B. 109, 2011-2012 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2011); AB 117, 2011-2012 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2011).

¹² Prop 36 was enacted as the “Homelessness, Drug Addiction, and Theft Reduction Act.” County of Riverside District Attorney, “Information Bulletin Prop 36,” <https://rivcoda.org/sites/g/files/aldnop286/files/2024-12/Prop%2036%20Information%20Bulletin.pdf>, (accessed 3/25/25).

¹³ Repeat offenders can be charged with a “treatment-mandated felony” which means if they complete drug and mental health treatment, the case will be dismissed and expunged with no county jail time. California Health and Safety Code § 11395 (paraphrased).

¹⁴ Grecia Reséndez, “Proposition 47 Delivers Nearly \$1 Billion to California Communities.” *Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice*, September 12, 2024, “Prop 47 has been successful but is now under baseless attack, threatening

Employment and Recidivism: A Clear Link

Formerly incarcerated people face a complex job market, often without the necessary skills and education required. They have gaps in work history and are saddled with the stigma attached to incarceration. According to national recidivism data, as many as two-thirds of those released from prisons and jails will be arrested for a new offense within three years.¹⁵ Among recidivists, 89 percent are unemployed at the time of their rearrest.¹⁶

Consistent employment helps provide financial stability and reduce the likelihood of returning to incarceration.¹⁷ Herein lies the disconnect. While employment reduces recidivism, there are limited job opportunities for ex-offenders, especially those with limited work experience and skills.¹⁸ While the situation is challenging, enhanced training and job-search assistance provided to non-violent formerly incarcerated persons is substantially cost-effective.¹⁹ When it comes to money spent on correctional educational programs, the three-year return on investment for taxpayers is nearly 400%, or \$5 saved for every \$1 spent.²⁰

Employer reluctance to hire ex-offenders has been recognized as an additional hurdle. California passed The Fair Chance Act to try to offset that bias.²¹ This law is intended to lower barriers so previously convicted people can support themselves, build community ties, and improve or maintain their mental health.²² This “Ban the Box” legislation instructed the removal of check boxes on job applications that ask such things as, “Have you ever been convicted of a crime?”²³

Reducing early-stage employment bias through this type of legislation reflects the state’s overall desire to help formerly incarcerated people get back on their feet. However, Ban the Box has not solved the problem because “a prison record can block progress after interviews or background

the future of California’s focus on rehabilitation,” <https://www.cjci.org/reports-publications/report/proposition-47-delivers-nearly-1-billion-to-california-communities> (accessed 3/14/25).

¹⁵ Paula Santonocito, “Hiring ex-convicts.” *HR Daily Advisor*, September 5, 2017, <https://hrdailyadvisor.blr.com/2017/09/05/hiring-ex-convicts/>, (accessed 3/1/25).

¹⁶ Emily Douglas, “Stigma of the Scarlet Letter: Formerly incarcerated candidates fight dangerous hiring bias,” *HRD: Human Resources Director*, June 12, 2023, <https://www.hcamag.com/us/specialization/diversity-inclusion/stigma-of-the-scarlet-letter-formerly-incarcerated-candidates-fight-dangerous-hiring-bias/449316>, (accessed 3/19/25).

¹⁷ Simon Kolbeck, Steven Lopez, and Paul Bellair, “Does Stable Employment after Prison Reduce Recidivism Irrespective of Prior Employment and Offending?” *Justice Quarterly*, 41(1), 38–61, April 20, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2023.2201330> (accessed 3/20/25).

¹⁸ Crystal S. Yang, “Local Labor Markets and Criminal Recidivism,” *Journal of Public Economics*, 147, 16-29, March 2017, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047272716302067?via%3Dihub>, (accessed 3/1/25).

¹⁹ Aaron Yelowitz, Christopher Bollinger, “Civic Report, Prison-to-Work, The Benefits of Intensive Job-Search Assistance for Former Inmates,” *Manhattan Institute*, March 26, 2015, <https://manhattan.institute/article/prison-to-work-2>, (accessed 3/1/25).

²⁰ Lois Davis, et al, “Serving Time or Wasting Time,” *RAND Research and Commentary*, May 22, 2014, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/infographics/IG113.html>, (accessed 3/1/25).

²¹ The Fair Chance Act is a part of the Fair Employment and Housing Act, an antidiscrimination statute, and is codified in Cal. Gov. Code §12952.

²² State of California Civil Rights Department, “Fair Chance Act: Criminal History and Employment,” November 2022, section 1, https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2022/11/Fair-Chance-Act-FAQ_ENG.pdf, (accessed 1/26/25).

²³ “Fair Chance Act: Criminal History and Employment,” sections 2 and 3.

checks.”²⁴ While this law allows an applicant to display their qualifications before being asked about conviction history, depending on circumstances, employers can rescind job offers based on background checks.

This hurdle does not need to be insurmountable. Second-chance employers are a category of businesses that believe offering fair and equal job opportunities to those with criminal records helps both employees and society as a whole.²⁵ These employers not only gain valuable talent, but they also earn tax breaks, some of the jobs they offer are subsidized, and they can apply for insurance bonds that ease worries about dishonesty. A second chance can be a win for the employer and the formerly incarcerated by offering both dignity and a paycheck.

APPROACH

In accordance with Penal Code 919(b), the 2024-2025 Marin County Civil Grand Jury fulfilled its legal obligation to inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the County. During its investigation, jurors toured County Jail and took special interest in how incarcerated persons are assisted in gaining employment upon release. The Grand Jury subsequently interviewed formerly incarcerated persons and representatives from:

- Marin County Board of Supervisors
- Marin County Probation Department
- Marin County Public Defender’s Office
- Marin County Department of Health and Human Services
- Marin County Sheriff’s Office
- Marin County Departments that offer employment potentially suitable to formerly incarcerated persons
- Non-profit organizations that provide employment services to justice-involved persons

The Grand Jury also reviewed publications, academic studies, surveys, state regulations governing jails, California statutes, Federal Department of Justice archives, California Board of State and Community Corrections websites and publications, Marin County budgets, Marin County Sheriff’s policies and procedures, compliance reports, previous grand jury reports from Marin County and others, and documents provided by interviewees.

While acutely important to successful reentry into society, this Grand Jury did not include an investigation into the programs that deal with mental health, substance abuse, and housing challenges impacting the formerly incarcerated. The Grand Jury appreciates that these issues must be addressed before an individual can be successfully employed.

The Grand Jury completed this investigation on April 1, 2025.

²⁴ Talmon Joseph Smith, “Ex-Prisoners Face Headwinds as Job Seekers, Even as Openings Abound,” *New York Times*, July 6, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/06/business/economy/jobs-hiring-after-prison.html>, (accessed 3/19/25).

²⁵ Second Chance Business Coalition, “Why It Matters,” <https://secondchancebusinesscoalition.org/why-it-matters>, (accessed 3/15/25).

DISCUSSION

So why would the Grand Jury shine a light on this subset of people who are trying to find a job after jail? While alleviating housing insecurity and improving access to mental health and substance use counseling are critical to reentry success, securing financial stability must come next. Many reentry stories speak to a desire to work but also describe overwhelming hurdles blocking their paths. Frustration comes with being thwarted by constant denial, endless job applications that are ignored, and welcome letters that morph into rejection after review of a criminal record. The list goes on and on.

The Grand Jury believes that additional County focus on clearing the path for post-incarceration employment supports Marin Health and Human Services' (HHS) new strategic plan. HHS says it is eager to include the marginalized and the vulnerable to achieve equity and justice for all in our community: "We want all Marin residents to be informed and empowered to lead their best lives."²⁶ They state that success includes recognizing unique barriers to employment.

The BOS has been vocal about building a racially equitable community, and many incarcerated people come from underserved populations. In January 2025, the BOS adopted a resolution affirming its unwavering support for the rights, freedoms, and interests of all members of our diverse community, regardless of identity, background, or immigration status.²⁷

Additionally, the BOS' stated mission and view of the community's top priorities include a focus on "Improving recruitment and retention of the County workforce."²⁸ The previously incarcerated population is an applicant pool that could help the BOS with its stated goal. There are jobs within the County itself that would be suitable for the reentry population.

The Grand Jury's desire to increase successful post-incarceration employment aligns with the County's aspirations. The return to lock-up within three years, a general definition of recidivism, is both disheartening and costly. This revolving door back to jail is no small issue. Estimates provided to the Grand Jury reveal that the recidivism rate in Marin is in the range of 33 percent. Going back to jail rarely helps rehabilitation. As Marin County adapted to the changes brought about by AB109, their first three-year Community Corrections Partnership report points out that "it costs more to house a person in jail than it does to supervise them in the community. Additionally, what is possible in terms of rehabilitation and treatment under supervision, granted enough time, is far more powerful in recidivism reduction than jail time."²⁹

²⁶ Marin County Health and Human Services, "Future Forward: Marin Health and Human Services Strategic Plan 2025-2028," last updated January 16, 2025, pp. 9 and 13, https://www.marincounty.gov/sites/g/files/fdkgoe241/files/2025-01/mhhs_strategic_plan_f.2_single.pdf, (accessed 3/25/25).

²⁷ County of Marin, "Resolution of the Board of Supervisors, Marin County," January 14, 2025, https://marin.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=33&event_id=3903&meta_id=1355178, (accessed 3/25/25).

²⁸ Office of the County Executive, Proposed Budget FY 2024-26, p. 3, https://www.marincounty.gov/sites/g/files/fdkgoe241/files/2024-06/fy-2024-26-proposed-budget_vf.pdf, (accessed 2/28/25).

²⁹ Community Corrections Partnership, "Marin County Realignment Report," October 2014, p. 10. <https://www.bscc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Marin-County-FY14.pdf>, (accessed 2/20/25).

Minimal Job-Readiness Training While Incarcerated

People getting ready to leave the Marin County Jail often face a variety of roadblocks when trying to land back on their feet. They may have nowhere to live, no access to mental health or substance use counseling, and no job waiting on the outside. The County offers some help in all these areas, by way of the Jail Reentry Team. While this group of Sheriff's deputies and social workers do their best to offer support during incarceration, the complexity, cost, and diversity of the problems are substantial.

Interviewees said that many reentry needs are addressed pre-release, but one unresolved outlier is getting the IP "job-ready." Job-readiness is possessing foundational and behavioral skills, plus being motivated and able to work. To that end, Title 15 Minimum Standards for Local Detention Facilities spells out that a jail shall provide voluntary academic and/or vocational education, using available resources.³⁰ The County Jail determines what, if any offerings, can be safely delivered with their space and funds.

In assessing what job-readiness training is available in County Jail before release, the Grand Jury reviewed the Marin County Sheriff's 2025 Custody Manual. Policy 1005 states the County Jail provides vocational programs designed to improve employability after release, dictated by available funding and other IP programs and routines.³¹ It lists vocational skill offerings such as horticulture, woodworking, auto body and painting, and basic auto repair. Interviews and tours of the facility confirmed that no such programs are offered. While constraints exist that make certain vocational training unfeasible, listing them gives a false impression that they are options. Although they are required by Policy 1005, no annual needs assessments to determine the types of programs needed by the IPs could be located.

Inside County Jail, the in-custody programming schedule detailing the weekly classes for the incarcerated includes offerings such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, religious groups, substance use, and health classes. There is no time slot or other mention of job-readiness or vocational training. While touring the facility, Grand Jurors were informed about a kitchen skills program (available to men only), but information about its scope and effectiveness was not available.

³⁰ Board of State and Community Corrections, "Title 15 Minimum Standards for Detention Facilities," effective April 1, 2025, p. 39, <https://www.bscc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Title-15-Adult-Full-Regulation-Text-2025-Effective-4.1.2025.pdf>, (accessed 3/25/25).

³¹ Marin County Sheriff's Office Custody Manual, https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25526217-release_20250102_t183054_marin-county-sheriffs-office-custody-manualpdf/#document/p395, (accessed 2/27/25).

Falling Through the Cracks

Whether locked up for days or years, when the County Jail sallyport door opens, IPs are typically sent out with a backpack, a bus pass, and a packet of papers. The brochures are chock-full of contact phone numbers and websites for departments and organizations that offer help with public assistance, transportation, shelters, counseling, legal assistance, and employment (one example is Figure 1).

Figure 1. Marin Community Resource Guide 2025

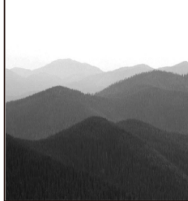
<p>CRISIS LINES</p> <p>Marin BHRS Access Line (888) 818-1115 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline 988 or (800) 273-8255 Crisis Text Line Text MARIN to 741741 Línea de Prevención del Suicidio (888)628-9454 Adult Protective Services (APS) 473-2774 California Peer Warmline 855-845-7415 Crisis Stabilization Unit 473-6666 Mobile Crisis Response Team 473-6392 Veterans Crisis Line (800)-273-8255 (Press 1) or Text 838255 Child & Family Svcs (CPS) 473-7153 Center for Domestic Peace (DV) 924-6616 Community Violence Solutions 259-2850 Long-Term Care Ombudsman 473-7446</p> <p>FOOD RESOURCE GUIDE</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n1FevrKZL-Go_ET8KQs3OMfOJWUo3Vxi/view PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FOOD PROGRAMS Cal-Fresh (aka food stamps) (877) 410-8817 Women, Infants, and Children/WIC 473-6889</p> <p>FREE FOOD PANTRIES SF-Marin Food Bank Food Locator 282-1900</p> <p>HOT MEALS St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room 454-3303 Jackson Café (Vivalon) 456-9062 Senior Congregate Meals (sites vary) 473-4636</p> <p>GROCERY & MEAL DELIVERY SF-Marin Food Bank (Waitlist) 824-3663 Mom's Meals 578-2961 Performance Kitchen (844) 607-0676</p> <p>SERIOUS ILLNESS MEAL DELIVERY Vivalon Nourish (<60 yrs. old) 456-9062 x176 Ceres Project 707-829-3833 x21 (En) x203 (Sp)</p> <p>Homebound Older Adult Meal Delivery Meals on Wheels (<60/homebound) 473-4636 Meals on Wheels (<60/W. Marin) 663-8361</p> <p>TRANSPORTATION Trip Planning Dial 511 & Say "Marin Transit" Golden Gate Bridge, Hwy. & Transp. Dept. 921-5858 Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (707) 794-3330 Marin Access - Marin Transit 454-0902 Carepool Volunteer Driver (65+) 454-0927 Dillon Beh/Tomales/Pt. Reyes 454-0902</p>	<p>SHELTERS/COORDINATED ENTRY Coordinated Entry CE@marincounty.org Individuals: 473-4663 Families: 457-2115 Ambassadors of Hope & Opportunity/TAY 203-0369 Center for Domestic Peace 924-6616 Gilead House (Single Mothers) 895-5575 Homeward Bound of Marin 382-3363 Homeward Bound Family Center 457-2115 Services for Homeless Adults (HBOFA) 457-9651</p> <p>SHOWERS/LAUNDRY Ritter Center 457-8182, x120</p> <p>RENTAL & UTILITY AID CA Lifeline Program (866) 272-0349 Everyoneon.org (low-cost Internet/Computers) 526-7500 Community Action Marin 526-7500 CAM LIHEAP Energy Program 526-7500 Chronicle Season of Sharing Fund 526-7500 North Marin Community Svcs 897-4147 Adopt A Family 456-7805 Canal Alliance 454-2640 Ritter Center 457-8182 St. Vincent de Paul Society 454-0366 Women Helping All People 332-1703 West Marin Community Svcs 663-8361</p> <p>EMPLOYMENT/TRAINING & BENEFITS Public Assistance Benefits (877) 410-8817 CalFresh Employment and Training Program Employment & Training Branch 473-3350 CalWORKs Employment Services 473-3350 General Relief Employment Program 473-3450 Supplemental Security Income Advocacy Bloom (work clothing for clients) 482-6077 CA Department of Rehabilitation 893-7702 CEO Works (recently incarcerated) 878-1530 Fresh Starts Culinary Academy 382-3363, x231 Marin City CDC 415-339-2837 Ritter Center Benefits Enrollment 457-8182 EDD (800) 300-5616 or (833) 978-2511 Social Security Admin (800) 772-1213 YWCA Marin 479-9922</p>
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**Marin
Community
Resource
Guide
2025**

415-473-INFO (4636)
473INFO@marincounty.gov

[Marin HHS Community Resource Guide](#)

ONLINE RESOURCE GUIDES
 Dial 211 OR
211bayarea.org/counties/marin-county OR
findhelp.org
 Community Action Marin Resource Guides
 Guía de Recursos Para La Familia
 Community Resource Finder



**PHONE NUMBERS ARE
IN THE 415 AREA CODE,
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED*

Source: Marin County Department of Health and Human Services

Upon review of these pamphlets, it becomes clear that these resources are not specific to the previously incarcerated. These lists offer no step-by-step directions, no road map that guides the newly released. Those interviewed revealed that without any personal contact or warm hand-off, these papers are of little use. The Grand Jury has learned that a critical gap exists, one that is caused by the failure to connect IPs to employment services before release. Although there is no legal requirement to do so, employability specialists who advise IPs say working with them in their last three months of incarceration is important. It not only helps with job readiness, but soothes anxiety and fear around reentering the job market.³²

According to interviews, there are no regularly scheduled sessions with employment counselors and no formal mechanism for pre-release meetings. This means no relationship is established before the newly released are sent off to navigate the complexities of a job hunt. This disconnect is a lost opportunity to help the incarcerated who seek to turn themselves around. It is a missed chance to save the County money by reducing recidivism.

³² Thea Marie Rood, "The Northbay Employment Connection Matches Skilled Employees with Local Employers in Six California Counties," <https://www.workforcealliancencnorthbay.org/>, (accessed 3/13/25).

Newly released people often leave jail without even having their own contact information. They may not know where they will live and may not have a phone number. Trying to locate them after they are gone is often impossible for the counselors who might be able to help. Although those in the reentry population will likely meet a probation officer or a recovery coach back in an office at the Civic Center, several weeks may have passed.

In the meantime, there is no guarantee that the newly released will make contact with the right people at the right time. They tell us that they are left to figure most things out themselves. It becomes hit or miss. Considering their concurrent uphill battle for housing, substance use programs, and mental healthcare, finding a job can seem all but impossible.

Uncoordinated Efforts after Release

The Grand Jury investigation finds that the County's process for providing employment assistance is uncoordinated and has limited results. The Probation Department, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and non-profit community partners are available to lend a hand. These various entities all possess certain tools in their toolbox, but which formerly incarcerated person is offered what services and when that happens remains inconsistent.

According to estimates provided, roughly 5,200 people are released from County Jail each year. The Grand Jury found that there are several disjointed access points to employment resources for the reentry population. In some cases, they may be referred by a Probation Officer to an HHS-supervised Employment Development Counselor (EDC). This meeting may take place weeks to months after release.

If the EDC is successful in making contact, the newly released person's need for job-related services is assessed. EDCs help lower barriers to employment by providing gas cards, paying tuition for educational programs, getting work clothing or a telephone, and helping with job applications. There may be a referral to a job search workshop, computer training, or soft skill coaching that helps with time management and teamwork abilities. There may be some guidance toward on-the-job training opportunities or direction on joining a temporary work crew offered by community non-profit agencies. But the County toolbox is limited, and the EDC caseload is upwards of 60 clients. In addition to the long client list, the EDC role includes developing connections with potential employers, using their own network to match job seekers to openings.

Based on the limited information provided to the Grand Jury on the thousands of detainees who come and go from County Jail annually, for the one-year period from October 2023 through September 2024, only 54 released persons were enrolled for County EDC services and just 15 secured employment. If the goal is that IPs be released and become employed members of society, then we must consider whether the current process and assignment of duties and resources is producing the most effective results.

Patchwork of Non-profit Agencies

Another avenue to employment assistance comes in the form of referrals to non-profit organizations that work with justice-involved individuals. These agencies have programs

specifically tailored to help those with criminal records. They offer services like resume workshops, interview preparation, help acquiring work clothing, and access to employers who have more inclusive hiring practices. However, on the journey from County Jail back to society, there is no clear process that directs formerly incarcerated individuals to these resources.

Workforce Alliance of the North Bay (WANB), a federally funded program under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, assists businesses around workforce issues and underserved people in securing employment.³³ It has a proven record helping vulnerable populations such as teen parents, veterans, and those with disabilities. With justice-involved job seekers, they are able to tap into The Prison to Employment grant program. This grant program provides funding for reentry services, job training, and subsidized employment, paving a path away from recidivism.³⁴

Many former IPs meet the criteria for the WANB programs, yet those interviewed say that there is no coordination and little communication among the Probation Department, HHS, and WANB. For example, an arm of WANB, CareerPoint, offers to meet with job seekers at their College of Marin Indian Valley Campus career center and match them to workshops, training, and funding. This resource is frequently untapped because there is no formal system that connects the IP directly to these nonprofit agencies. The Grand Jury learned that open slots specifically for justice-involved job seekers go unfilled due to a lack of referrals.

The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) is a national nonprofit organization with 27 offices across the nation, including a Marin presence.³⁵ They offer comprehensive employment and training services, including job readiness training, subsidized transitional employment opportunities, and ongoing support. CEO directs its efforts to those who have a criminal record. CEO participants get paid to work, often on work crews intended to be a temporary steppingstone as they search for more permanent and sustainable employment.

Sometimes CEO gets referrals from the County Probation Department but also secures its participants through outreach at housing shelters and community organizations focused on treatment for mental health and substance use.

The Grand Jury could not find any established system in place for the County employment assistance resources and the nonprofits to coordinate and maximize their services. Although there is obvious duplication of available help, no one is tasked with the responsibility to connect the EDCs or organizations like Workforce Alliance or CEO to capitalize on what they each have to offer.

³³ Workforce Alliance of the Northbay, “About Us” website tab, <https://www.workforcealliancenorthernbay.org/job-seekers/>, (accessed 3/1/25).

³⁴ RDA Consulting under contract with the North Bay Employment Connection (NBEC), “North Bay Employment Connection: WIOA Regional Plan, Program Years 2025-2028 (Draft),” 2025, p. 27, <https://www.workforcealliancenorthernbay.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/WIOA-NBEC-Regional-Strategic-Plan-PY-25-28-Draft.pdf>, (accessed 3/25/25).

³⁵ Center for Employment Opportunities, “About Us: Locations” tab, <https://www.ceoworks.org/locations> (accessed 3/14/25).

By contrast, at the state level, the California Workforce Employment Board, which administers the state Prison to Employment Initiative, and funds programs for the integration from the prison system (including San Quentin) to the workforce, recognizes the importance of “sewing together an often disjointed patchwork of pre-release and post-release services into a coordinated effort.”³⁶ It acknowledges that a warm handoff between incarceration and the workforce case manager is increasingly becoming the norm. There are take-away lessons to be learned from programs such as these.

Harnessing the Power of Coordinated Resources

During its investigation, the Grand Jury was repeatedly told that better results would come from a system where both County and non-profit agency employment counselors begin their work inside the jail prior to release. Without such pre-release meetings, IPs are gone before a relationship is established, and it is challenging to make contact. While there is no prohibition to counselors from making visits in County Jail, interviewees faced difficulty in establishing this routine. Counselors say that this absence of established relationships with IPs before release often causes insurmountable gaps in service.

One notable result of the lack of coordination or a clearinghouse for information is that there is no central repository for collecting and tracking data on the range of employment services being provided by the various constituencies. The Grand Jury could find no central location for Second Chance Employment contacts, electronic mailing lists of available jobs appropriate for Marin’s justice-involved, or educational materials suitable for potential employers about the benefits of hiring the formerly incarcerated.

While one of the guiding principles of the Marin Community Corrections Partnership is that it be data-driven, the Grand Jury learned post-release employment data is not collected and/or available. Other than information compiled individually by a counselor, there is no systematic maintenance of data about the number of those released from County Jail who find success with training and employment services. While the Marin CCP reports that there is periodic program evaluation, they meet just once a year³⁷ and post-incarceration employment has not been prioritized. These factors make oversight of the system more difficult and hinder the attainment of desired results.

CONCLUSION

After considering the evidence provided by numerous independently sourced documents and interviewees, the Grand Jury concluded that a unified effort would dramatically streamline deployment of existing resources and improve effectiveness. Results of the Grand Jury investigation indicate that a focus on coordination and maximization of currently available

³⁶ California Workforce Development Board, “Prison to Employment Initiative, Interim Report for Evaluation of Workforce Development Programs, submitted pursuant to Supplemental Report of the 2018-19 Budget Act, Item 7120-101-0001,” *Prison to Employment*, https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2021/10/P2E-Interim-Report_ACCESSIBLE.pdf, (accessed 3/25/25).

³⁷ <https://www.bscc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Marin-County-FY-23-24-CCP-Survey-Part-A-Part-B.pdf>

resources targeted at improving job readiness and boosting opportunities for formerly incarcerated persons may reduce recidivism and incarceration costs.

Rebuilding self-confidence and having a positive outlook go a long way toward successful reentry. How the County responds can be the source of stability and encouragement that is so crucial to those who find themselves in this challenging situation.

FINDINGS

- F1. The lack of coordination and limited communication within and among Marin County resources and departments (Marin County Health and Human Services, Marin County Probation, Marin County Sheriff's Office, and nonprofits, including both those contracted with the County of Marin and independent agencies) hinders successful reentry employment.
- F2. A lack of engagement between the County of Marin and local employers on the benefits of hiring the previously incarcerated results in fewer job prospects.
- F3. Failure to track post-incarceration employment and its relationship to recidivism in Marin County has limited the ability for County agencies and/or departments to assess the effectiveness of their initiatives and spending, and impedes efforts to determine whether job support efforts are successful.
- F4. When Marin County and non-profit employment counselors do not connect with the incarcerated before they are released, there are lost opportunities to provide job counseling that could reduce the chance of returning to jail.
- F5. The Marin County Sheriff's Office Custody Manual (Policy 1005) section on Education, Vocation, and Rehabilitation is outdated and, as a result, gives a false impression that training can be made available that does not exist in the Marin County Jail.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. By December 31, 2026, the Marin County Board of Supervisors should direct the office of the County Executive to create a formal coordination plan between the Jail Reentry Team, Marin County Probation Department, Marin County Department of Health and Human Services, and community resources that offer post-incarceration employment assistance.
- R2. By December 31, 2026, the Marin County Board of Supervisors should allocate to a specific County agency or department the responsibility to oversee a centralized clearinghouse for post-incarceration employment services.
- R3. By December 31, 2026, the Marin County Board of Supervisors should ensure that a mechanism exists by which data is collected, tracked, and analyzed to be used to evaluate the efficacy of post-incarceration employment services.
- R4. By December 31, 2026, the Marin County Sheriff should implement a formal system by which incarcerated persons can meet with an Employment Development Coordinator prior to release.
- R5. By January 1, 2026, the Marin County Sheriff's Custody Manual should be updated to reflect current educational and vocational training that could be made available to the incarcerated.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Grand Jury requires responses from the following governing bodies:

From the following elected county official within 60 days:

- Marin County Sheriff (F4-F5, R4-R5)

From the following governing body within 90 days:

- Marin County Board of Supervisors (F1-F3, R1-R3)

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted in accordance with Penal Code section 933 (c) and subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

INVITED RESPONSES

- Marin County Probation Office (F1-F5, R1-R4)

Note: At the time this report was prepared, documents and other information were available at the websites listed.

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury. The California State Legislature has stated that it intends the provisions of Penal Code Section 929 prohibiting disclosure of witness identities to encourage full candor in testimony in Grand Jury investigations by protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who participate in any Civil Grand Jury investigation.