

# Pre-release housing units, a comprehensive reinsertion scheme

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**PRE-RELEASE HOUSING UNITS**

**HEALTH**

**LABOR/LABOR TRAINING**

**CRIMINOLOGY**

**PSYCHOLOGY**

**SOCIAL WORK**

**EDUCATION**

**REINTEGRATION**

**POST-CRIMINAL SERVICES**

**L**osing your freedom is a trying circumstance for most people, however it can be a time to ponder mistakes and correct your course. Currently, correctional facilities lack effective schemes for reintegration into society, and this means the time spent in prison turns out to be counterproductive, for both the incarcerated and for society as a whole.

However, when correctional authorities are sensitive and empathetic to the needs of those on the verge of achieving their freedom, projects can arise that will contribute to the improvement of our society and for the incarcerated individuals themselves.

Imagine being an incarcerated individual, who is subject to the strict regimes of authority through which you are instructed, monitored and supervised to comply with the rules and institutional guidelines of a correctional facility and your stay at this location is nothing more than a constant and permanent longing to be out, your imagination is nothing more a desire to escape, to become a simple being again, or because nothing keeps you busy, you start having suicidal thoughts since you do not find an echo in your thoughts with the people around you.

Only by thinking this way can we be empathetic enough to be able to create human and sensitive strategies to provide incarcerated individuals with tools to keep them busy with activities aimed at their reintegration into society including things like: education, sports, work, job training and health. Once we understand this, we can develop solutions, such as thinking about the comprehensive work of the correctional system to prepare individuals for their release.

These plans must enable the improvement of conditions of those who tomorrow will be at liberty among us and include considerations for incarcerated individuals who belong to the following groups: the elderly, the disabled, indigenous people, and former officials, and those who are soon completing their sentences but still have time left to obtain a benefit.

## Preparing for freedom

One of the projects considered to fulfill this vision is the creation of exclusive spaces to prepare these people for freedom. The Integral Program of Preparation for Life in Freedom is a place where, with mainly labor activities, they can acquire or reinforce skills at work or in their training, obtain the knowledge and skills that will allow

them, once released, to fulfill necessary work requirements and expectations that will facilitate their integration into general society. Persons who obtain their freedom are always searching to improve their condition through personal improvement and socio-economic stability and a stable source of employment will bring them more benefits, in any of their fields, than criminal activity.

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In implementing the project, we put forward the need for a particularly special place, segregated from the rest of the population, a housing unit where we can concentrate the population of incarcerated individuals who will soon be completing their sentence and be released from prison. Once this housing unit has been built, we must create a unique program for the incarcerated individuals, raising awareness through the prison system's areas, namely health, labor and labor training, criminology, psychology, social work and education.

It is important to carefully choose participants who will be included in the new pre-release housing unit. Each incarcerated individual will be involved in tailored activity plans for reintegration, which are personalized for each incarcerated individual.

During their stay in this specially assigned space, we make sure that each individual wishes to remain in it, seeking at all times their sense of belonging and defending the personal values of respect, humanity, and social purpose. At this point, if any participant infringes any of the guidelines framed in the program, they may be expelled, and they may lose the possibility of obtaining

the benefits granted by law, under the terms considered for such purposes.

This space, specially assigned to the project, is where there are participation agreements between the private sector and incarcerated individuals with the promise that people active in terms of training or work may be released with a stable source of employment.

In this regard, it is paramount to define the great work of the socially responsible companies that have partnered with various penitentiary centers under the framework of the Prison Industry. This represents one of the greatest occupations of the incarcerated individual's time. These companies represent a bridge to positive release since they contribute to making the reintegration process more "friendly"; for example, by not making it mandatory to have a voting card, which in most cases represents an obstacle to getting a job; in the same vein as a criminal record.

In addition, prison security plays a crucial role since they are in charge of maintaining order and discipline among the population, adding to the projects and work programs mentioned above.

### Integrated solutions for reentry

In the final part of the reintegration cycle is the Post-Criminal Services Unit, through which a Release Support Network [inter-institutional] is woven to make available to people, now released, the services that government institutions offer to the general public.



Photo courtesy Juan José González González.

Representing the Department of Corrections of the State of Guanajuato are José Luis Macías, José Adán Ruiz, Rafael del Río, Juan José González Gonzpale, Jesús Salinas and Jesús Medina.

Among them, integrated agencies cover the social, sports, economic, cultural, social responsibility, and health aspects.

Follow-up through the Post-Criminal Services Unit is six months, both for the released and their families because this period is the most critical in terms of vulnerability and risk of recidivism.

In addition, within the framework of the program statistical follow-up of successful cases and their subsequent participation with the prison system in crime prevention activities is developed.

Finally, in their life out of prison, newly released individuals access the portfolio of social alternatives provided by government agencies as part of an overall strategy to combat recidivism in a cross-cutting manner.

### Having a positive impact

In conclusion, the more effective the reentry program is with the incarcerated individual, the greater the mitigation of the risk of recidivism and thus strengthening the prison system.

Security is everyone's job, and the prison system should provide the tools for the proper reincorporation of incarcerated individuals to civilian life, in communion with society and in harmony with their peers. This is how Guanajuato created a model project to insert released individuals into the community using the state's resources available to those previously deprived of liberty.

To this end, the State Government spent approximately 80 million pesos on creating and constructing a new housing unit for incarcerated individuals with specific characteristics.

The Prison System of the State of Guanajuato is at the forefront of quality operation. It is committed to maintaining and raising the standards of its institutions, which have had a positive impact, in addition to its achievements as a Government Entity, such as social reinsertion and reducing the recidivism rate.



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