

WALSR Conversation Toolbox

Sometimes we know why it’s important, but in the heat of the moment we don’t have ready access to our talking points in our head. This toolbox will provide you with some dialogue prompts to facilitate the conversation in an open and welcoming way.

“When people contribute their own ideas, they make a commitment to them in ways they do not when ideas are handed to them.”<sup>1</sup>

<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Reflection</u>
<p>Many Americans have a criminal record. Chances are, if you don’t have one yourself, you know someone who does.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to the Brennan Center for Justice there are as many people with an arrest record as there are with a four-year college degree and by the age of 23 nearly 1 in 3 Americans will have been arrested<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• In Washington Prisons alone 7,872 people were released back into their communities<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>	<p>What thoughts or emotions come up when you think about serving someone with a criminal record?</p>
<p>Reentering individuals are members of our community and our community is safer when they are happy, productive, accepted members of society.</p>	<p>What does community mean to you? When you envision the perfect community, what does it look like?</p>
<p>When you meet people’s basic needs they start to rise above whatever they are going through. They transition from surviving to thriving.</p>	<p>How do you think you would know when people are just surviving? When they are thriving?</p>
<p>Helping people who are justice system involved does not mean you, library staff, or library patrons should accept abuse. Regardless of someone’s background, patrons should be held accountable for their actions.</p>	<p>How do you enforce the patron code of conduct while still remaining professional and courteous?</p>
<p>It is beneficial to staff and patrons to create an environment where <b>all</b> patrons are made to feel welcome and free from discrimination. Practice empathy.</p>	<p>Think of a time when you have been demeaned or made to feel unwelcome. How did it make you feel? How did you react? Imagine if it wasn’t just an isolated incident, if it was the norm?</p>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ica-international.org/top-facilitation/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.brennancenter.org/blog/just-facts-many-americans-have-criminal-records-college-diplomas>

<sup>3</sup> <http://doc.wa.gov/information/data/docs/admissions-releases-by-county.pdf>

*WLA 2017 Learn Local! Yakima:*

*Reentry Success: How Washington Libraries Can Contribute to a Successful Reentry*

## *Washington Libraries for Successful Reentry WALSR*

Connecting people who are reentering into the community with library services.

Sign up for the WALSR listserv at <https://www.sos.wa.gov/library/libraries/lists.aspx>

Institutional Library Services Reentry wiki <https://wiki.sos.wa.gov/ILSRe-entry>

### What can I do within my community?

Here are some of the organizations where you can volunteer your time to help inmates reentering society

Civil Survival (Washington state)

<http://civilsurvival.com/>

Community Partnership for Transition Services (Pierce, Snohomish & King Counties)

[http://www.cpts.info/pierce\\_cpts.aspx](http://www.cpts.info/pierce_cpts.aspx)

Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (Seattle area)

<http://www.fepps.org/>

The If Project (Pierce and King counties only)

<http://www.theifproject.com/>

Kairos Prison Ministry (Nationwide)

<http://www.kairosprisonministry.org/>

University Beyond Bars (Washington state)

<http://www.universitybeyondbars.org/>

### What have other libraries done that can inspire me?

Colorado State Library Free to Learn Project Overview

(Free to Learn began as a grant-funded project in 2010 and is now the Women's Open Lab)

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/cdelib/lsta/download/pdf/freetolearn.pdf>

Denver Public Library's Resources for Ex-Offenders (CO)

<https://www.denverlibrary.org/resources-ex-offenders>

Hennepin County Library (MN)

<http://www.hclib.org/about/news/2016/sept/families-affected-by-incarceration>

Urban Libraries Council

[http://www.urbanlibraries.org/free-to-learn----public-library-services-for-ex-offenders-innovation-62.php?page\\_id=46](http://www.urbanlibraries.org/free-to-learn----public-library-services-for-ex-offenders-innovation-62.php?page_id=46)

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What can I read to learn more about mass incarceration and what prison libraries do?

Check out The Marshall Project Bookshelf

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/books#.jOrvQGHEv>

The following titles are personally recommended by your presenters:

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: New Press, 2011.

Clark, Sheila, and Erica MacCreigh. *Library Services to the Incarcerated: Applying the Public Library Model in Correctional Facility Libraries*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006.

Kerman, Piper. *Orange Is the New Black: My Year in a Woman's Prison*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010.

Stevenson, Bryan. *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2014.

Any good films or videos I can watch?

13th. Directed by Ava DuVernay. Oakland, CA: Kandoo Films, 2016 – the Oscar-Nominated documentary on Netflix.

*An Unlikely Partnership and Building Community, Building Hope* a featurette about Washington's Parent Alternative Sentencing law and a partnership between the Department of Corrections and the Department for Early Learning. <http://www.doc.wa.gov/news/2017/03292017p.htm> March 10, 2017

Are there any other good resources I should check out?

ACLU Mass Incarceration website

<https://www.aclu.org/issues/mass-incarceration>

The New Jim Crow Resource list

<http://newjimcrow.com/take-action>

“It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.”

— **Nelson Mandela**

# Ask Questions!

Getting to know your library's policies and procedures to better help individuals reentering society.

- If someone doesn't have a state issued ID can they:
  - Register for a library card?
  - Use internet computers using a temporary pass?
  - Print, scan, fax?
  - Attend programs?
  
- If someone doesn't have a mailing address:
  - Can they register for a library card?
  - Use internet computers using a temporary pass?
  - Print, scan, fax?
  - Attend programs?
  - Can they use general delivery as an address?
    - General Delivery is mail delivery to a post office for pickup by the addressee.
  - Do you know a shelter or social services that offer mail service to homeless individuals in your area?
  
- If someone has overdue fines or lost material from long ago:
  - How long do the fines exist on their account?
  - Does the library send the fines to collections?
  - Is there amnesty for old fines/lost material?
  - Can the library recall the fines from collections?
  - Is there a process for appealing fines due to extreme circumstances?
  
- If someone is unfamiliar with current technology:
  - Does your library offer regular and various digital literacy classes?
  - Can individuals get technology assistance any time? Dose that include tutorials on unfamiliar personal technology?
  - Are there services like "check out a librarian," that would be beneficial to people who require more in-depth assistance?
  - Does your library offer technology to check out, i.e. tablets to use in the library or take home?
  
- Get to know patron code of conduct:
  - Does your agency have a patron code of conduct?
  - Is it available for patrons can see and read? Where?
  - What are the levels of staff empowerment? What are you allowed to do if a patron is breaking the code of conduct?
  - What would you do if you saw a patron breaking the code of conduct? Role play and practice different scenarios.
    - Give people the opportunity to make good choices. How can you deescalate the situation?
    - Find ways to get to yes.