

Road to Reentry Video Series  
*Meeting Your Basic Needs*  
Instructor's Guide

## Overview

Two-thirds of recently-released individuals will be rearrested within three years.<sup>1</sup> Often this is because the pressures of daily life lead these individuals to return to old, destructive habits and criminal behaviors. Those who succeed do so by meeting their basic daily needs, which, in turn, helps them to prepare for a better tomorrow.

This video focuses on how the formerly incarcerated can best meet their needs for transportation, housing, food, clothing, and identification. It pinpoints the most common barriers that individuals face in the initial weeks and months following release and identifies resources that will help the formerly incarcerated meet those basic needs.

Note that each participant's situation is different. Some participants may have greater access to family and community resources—they may have a place to live, a car, and a job already lined up; whereas another participant may not have access to those resources. Adjust your approach to this subject matter based on the most-pressing needs of your participants.

## Presentation Suggestions

Ask participants to think about what they will need (or continue to need) to be successful upon reentry. What are the most basic requirements? How will they support themselves? How will they get from place to place? Where will they sleep? Do they have government-issued identification? What about health insurance? How will they get to their meetings with their parole officer? Do they have enough clothes or proper interview attire?

These are questions that participants may take for granted, but they are immediate concerns for individuals looking to make a successful start upon their release from prison.

When you feel participants have a sense of their basic needs and the potential barriers they will face in meeting those needs, give them the **Anticipation Quiz**. Ask participants to complete the quiz prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow participants to state their answers and discuss them as a group.

Show the video. Encourage participants to make changes to their answers in the

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<sup>1</sup> "Recidivism." National Institute of Justice.  
<http://www.nij.gov/topics/corrections/recidivism/pages/welcome.aspx> June 17, 2014. Accessed on August 15, 2016.

Anticipation Quiz during the video. If you wish, allow participants time to complete this work after each section.

At the conclusion of the video, ask participants to discuss any changes they made to the answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information in the video. Follow up the discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from participants, or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and correct the quizzes as a group.

Assign the **Homework Option**, if desired.

## Anticipation Quiz

**Directions:** Answer the following questions as completely as possible. You may revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. What are the most basic needs an ex-offender must meet upon release?
2. List some examples of housing options available to ex-offenders upon release.
3. What barriers do ex-offenders face when looking for long-term housing?
4. What is a budget?

## Answer Key

1. (Answers may vary.) Basic needs include food, housing, transportation, clothing, and identification.
2. (Answers may vary.) Housing options include living with friends or family, shelters, missions and churches, and transitional housing.
3. (Answers may vary.) Barriers with long-term housing include the lack of income or work history, bad credit history, conviction history, and the lack of viable transportation options.
4. A budget is a list expenses and a plan for how you are going to cover them.

## Activities

### Activity #1

Title: Housing Pros and Cons

Format: Individual/Large Group

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Basic Needs Worksheet

Procedure:

1. Give each participant a copy of the “Basic Needs Worksheet” located at the end of this guide. Explain that they should identify which of these needs they still need to meet and then brainstorm possible solutions/alternatives to meeting those needs, based on what they learned from the video. They should also list the resources required to implement those solutions.
2. Come back together as a whole group and discuss each basic need in turn. What solutions did participants come up with? What barriers will they need to overcome in order to meet each need? What specific strategies can participants share for meeting those needs (E.g., inexpensive places to get food or clothing, housing authorities that are willing to rent to individuals with criminal records, etc.) Make a master list of the best suggestions for meeting each need.

## Activity #2

Title: A Basic Budget

Format: Individual

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Paper and pen

Procedure:

1. Ask participants to divide their paper in half. On one side they should write the heading “Income.” On the other side they should write the heading “Expenses.” Ask participants to fill out both sides, making sure that they consider all sources of income (including help from friends and family) and all of their potential expenses (rent, gas, utility bills, entertainment expenses, and so on).
2. Discuss the need for trying to save some money each paycheck, even if it is only five percent. Since income is often not easily adjusted, discuss ways to cut expenses to allow for more money to be saved. Identify money-saving strategies and resources participants can use to help balance their budget.

## Discussion Questions

1. While incarcerated, most of your basic needs (such as food and shelter) were provided for you. Once released, you will need to provide for yourself. What basic need have you struggled meeting (or expect to struggle meeting)? What challenges have you had to overcome (or do you expect to overcome) to meet this particular

need? How did you overcome those challenges (or how might you overcome those challenges)?

2. Basic needs create immediate short-term goals. It can be disheartening to only focus on your basic needs, however. Sometimes it can help to have long-term goals, such as owning a house or going back to school, to look forward to. Think about your long-term goals—those things you would like to have or work towards once your basic needs are met. For example, what would you like to start saving money for? Use these long-term goals as an incentive for making a successful reentry.

## Quick Quiz

Note: You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for participants to respond; or copy and hand this out as a written exercise. If you read the quiz, write or project responses for the group to see.

**Directions:** Indicate whether each statement is true or false, according to the video.

1. Most companies that claim to repair your credit history are scams and should be avoided.
2. Halfway houses often require the formerly incarcerated to have a job or be actively looking for one as a requirement for staying there.
3. It is important to have a plan in place for meeting your basic needs before you are released.
4. Approximately one-third of formerly incarcerated individuals will be back in prison within three years of their release.
5. Check-cashing places are a better option than opening up your own bank account.
6. A form of government ID, such as a driver's license, is a requirement for meeting most of your basic needs.
7. You should try to return to your old neighborhood upon release, regardless of whether it is a safe or secure environment.
8. The availability of reliable transportation is an important consideration when choosing a place to live.
9. Transitional housing usually provides free room and board with no stipulations or requirements.
10. Formerly-incarcerated individuals should start working on rebuilding their credit upon release.

### *Answer Key*

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|----------|----------|
| 1. True  | 6. True  |
| 2. True  | 7. False |
| 3. True  | 8. True  |
| 4. False | 9. False |
| 5. False | 10. True |

### **Homework Option**

Every person is entitled to a free credit report each year. However, many participants may not know how to go about getting a credit report or know how to interpret the report. First identify the primary sources for obtaining a credit report (Equifax, Experian, TransUnion) and discuss or demonstrate the process for obtaining a report. Be sure to point out that these companies will try to charge for additional services. Using a sample credit report, show participants how to read it, looking for inconsistencies or disputable items. As a homework assignment, have participants go online to obtain their own credit reports (ideally by going to [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com)). Have participants come to the next meeting with any questions they have concerning inconsistencies in their credit history and discuss the process for making corrections.

## Basic Needs Worksheet

Basic Need	How I Plan to Meet It	Barriers I Might Face	Steps I Need to Take
Housing <i>(EXAMPLE)</i>	Apartment	Affording the deposit, finding someone who will rent to me	Stay with family until I've saved up the deposit. Ask PO to help me identify renters who are open to those with a criminal history
Housing			
Transportation			
Food			
Clothing			
Identification			