



Community Mentor Program



Free2Succeed—What is it?

Free2Succeed is the IDOC Community Mentor Program designed to match community mentors with adult felons who are transitioning to communities throughout Idaho. These may be incarcerated individuals preparing for release or those who are currently on supervision but are seeking some additional support. Free2Succeed is focused on community mentoring and not inside an institution with the goal to find a mentor for someone who requests one about 90 days before their release.

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I became a mentor with the Free2Succeed program because I want to help people. I want to be a part of the solution and to give guys hope. Having walked in their shoes and understanding the struggle first-hand, I know how much a welcoming handshake and a hug meant to me, even from a stranger. I have had, and continue to have, great mentors in my life and know the value well. - Mark

How is Free2Succeed Structured?

Free2Succeed is structured to provide mentoring support within the local community wherein a newly released individual plans to reside. Once a mentor in the appropriate area is potentially matched to a mentee (inmate), IDOC facilitates an initial phone conversation between the mentor and mentee. This initial contact provides the opportunity for both individuals to introduce themselves to one another, discuss details regarding the Free2Succeed program, the expectations of both the mentor and mentee, and the support and challenges specific to the situation.

Upon the release to the community, the mentee meets with his or her designated mentor, and the probation and parole officer as soon as possible. This meeting is designed to ensure that the PO is aware that the parolee is involved in the Free2Succeed program and to facilitate communication with the mentor. During the mentorship process, the mentor provides periodic reports to the PO regarding the status and well-being of the mentee. This may include the progress of the mentee’s reintegration into the community, his or her attitudes, difficulties and challenges, motivations, desires, and other facets unique to rejoining the community at large after incarceration. It is important to understand that the role of mentors **IS NOT** to be involved in any type of supervision of the offender but can be another set of eyes and ears for the PO.



Mentor Initial Training and Orientation (ITO)

All mentors with the Free2Succeed program are required to attend, initially and on an annual basis, an Initial Training and Orientation (ITO) which are conveniently scheduled throughout the year in each district. Mentors can start mentoring before attending an ITO but must attend the next available training opportunity in their area.



Over 700 mentors have attended Initial Training and Orientation sessions in every district in Idaho

The training covers a wide array of topics which include criminal thinking, risk factors, boundaries, policy and procedures, best practices, suggestions for mentoring, roles of POs and other staff, protective factors, and a lot more. Probation and Parole officers and other staff are always invited and encouraged to attend any session. Our mentors appreciate hearing from POs and seek to learn how they can be of more assistance to them or what concerns there may be regarding the supervision of the mentee. The Mentor ITO schedule can be found on the IDOC website at: https://www.idoc.idaho.gov/content/prisons/mentors/mentor_training

We try to schedule the trainings at locations in the community and partner with various churches and organizations. We have done them at police stations, libraries, recovery centers, churches, community centers, etc., and probation and parole offices.

When tough situations arose, I knew if I didn't find someone to talk to, I would never be successful on my own. I realized very early on that I wanted to be that person that someone could talk to after they got out. I wanted other people to have the same hope I did.

Direct Impact of Mentors

Almost 2,000 Requests for Mentors have been received since inception of the program in Feb. 2016.

During the last 2 years, about 40% of the requests have been matched and about 40% of those matched are still active.

During the last 2 years, 6% of those who were matched with a mentor statewide have returned to prison.

Breakdown by District

D1—4%	D5—18%
D2—0%	D6—16%
D3—16%	D7—22%
D4—24%	

The Request and Match Process

1. Inmate submits a Request for Mentor to their case manager or the facility Volunteer Religious Coordinator (VRC) within 3 months of a release date. These requests can be found on EDOC—Policies—Forms—search for “mentor” or simply click here: <http://doc-sco-1fiche/WebLink/ElectronicFile.aspx?docid=651422&dbid=0>
2. The request goes to the district Mentor Site Coordinator (MSC) to where the inmate will be releasing who will then email the case manager back that they received the request and it is being processed.
3. Once a mentor has agreed to mentor the inmate, the MSC will schedule an Initial Phone Call with the case manager or VRC. The inmate will be provided an opportunity to speak with the mentor from a staff phone regarding the impending mentorship upon release. The mentor is provided with a suggested questions and topics to discuss to determine how best to assist.
4. The MSC will also add the mentor to FAMILY/ASSOCIATES in CIS and add a c-note for 2 reasons: to let staff know that the inmate has been “officially” matched with an approved Free2Succeed mentor AND to provide contact information for the case manager/PO to reach out to the mentor if needed, which can be very helpful in many situations when developing a release plan.
5. Once the inmate is released, an Initial Meeting is scheduled with the mentor, mentee, and PO asap to discuss some salient points of the mentorship. These meetings are often facilitated by the MSC but can be facilitated by the PO. It doesn't matter, the whole point is simply to provide an opportunity for the PO to meet the mentor and open lines of communication.
6. The mentorship continues and the mentor reports back periodically to the PO about progress, issues, concerns, questions, etc.



Partnership with AmeriCorps VISTA

Early on in the program, it was obvious there needed to be some type of ground game in each district to coordinate the Free2Succeed program. After discussing various options, the opportunity for IDOC to partner with AmeriCorps surfaced. IDOC has a history of working with AmeriCorps volunteers, and for the Free2Succeed program, the opportunity provided AmeriCorps VISTA member positions (Volunteers In Service To America) throughout Idaho.



IDOC entered into a three-year cost-share grant with Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS), the parent organization of AmeriCorps, to have 7 VISTA positions, one in each district to serve as Mentor Site Coordinators (MSC), and a Lead VISTA at Central Office. Although in some areas these positions have been difficult to fill for a variety of reasons, the VISTAs have helped increase the capacity and sustainability in all areas of the state in one form or another. VISTAs are not allowed to provide direct services but rather indirect services to help build community programs and initiatives. Current VISTAs (MSCs) and their locations can be found at https://www.idoc.idaho.gov/content/prisons/volunteers_mentors/district_coordinators

Mentor Site Coordinators are responsible for gathering the following information and data:

- Number of M/F mentors recruited and how they heard about the program
- How many mentors are matched, waiting to be matched, or on hiatus
- Who and what type of community presentations and how many
- How many mentors attended training and orientation and, any enhancement training
- How many offenders, incarcerated and supervised—M/F requested a mentor
- How many matches were made—M/F, supervision or incarceration, probation/parole
- How many matches were closed and for what reason

A Few More Numbers

Since the inception of the program in February, 2016, the overall number for those who have been matched with a mentor and then subsequently returned to prison is 6%. This gives us a good indication of how effective mentors can be in helping returning citizens transition, connect to their communities, be successful, and the positive impact to community safety.

However, looking a bit deeper, Evaluation and Compliance did a comparison of 2 groups of individuals using LSI-R assessment scores for the control group and a group who were matched with Free2Succeed mentors. This comparison looked at those individuals who recidivated which includes any new re-incarceration event as a PVer, termer, new probation, or rider after release.

The Free2Succeed Group N = 883	The Comp Group N = 3114
33% recidivism (291)	61% recidivism (1912)
Avg months to recidivate 10.71	Avg months to recidivate 12.2
Released to Probation 339, 1% recidivated	Released to Probation 344, 3.4% recidivated
452 Males, 469 Females	2,484 Males, 630 Females
Avg Age = 38	Avg Age = 39

The parameters used for this control group: a total LSI-R score that was > 23; Criminal History Domain > .3; Drug and Alcohol Domain > .3; and had a status release in 2016.

What this boils down to is that of those individuals who were matched with a Free2Succeed mentor, recidivated, meaning they violated and went back to prison, picked up a new charge and were sentenced to another rider, or stayed on supervision, at about half the rate of those who did not have a mentor.

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT

Jon Christiansen was released August 10th of 2018. Jon had a list of goals for himself once released. which included the normal things people looking forward to getting out would expect to see. Getting a car, obtaining a driver's license, maintaining employment, and moving forward with his life. His priorities began to change and family, friends, and others encouraged him to keep moving forward. It was at that point in time that he began to understand the importance of helping others who may be less fortunate when first released.

Jon produces music for local artists in the Boise area, and is also a singer, songwriter, and lead guitarist for a local band. He enjoys good food, family, his children, and a good horror movie! When asked his thoughts regarding the Free2Succeed program and mentoring, he says, "I do not know if it was a conscience decision necessarily, but at some point in time I simply realized how difficult that journey would have been if not for the help of other people that I was fortunate to have in my life. I have only been a mentor for a short while, and to be completely honest, I don't think I ever expected to be in such a position so soon after my release. I feel like it's a position of trust, and I am truly thankful and blessed in so many ways to have the opportunity to help others."



Mentors by the District

To date, Free2Succeed has had 672 people apply to be mentors!! (NOTE: not all mentors may be active)

The breakdown by district is:

District 1:	59
District 2:	49
District 3:	68
District 4:	246
District 5:	59
District 6:	67
District 7:	124

Success
isn't just what you
Accomplish
in your life,
it's about
what you
Inspire
others to do

"The impact of mentoring for adults returning to their communities from incarceration is dependent on how well reentry programs structure the mentoring component of the program, which involves collaborating with correctional facilities, thoughtfully selecting and matching mentors and participants, and effectively concluding the mentoring relationship. An integral part of the process also involves the understanding that mentoring should serve as a supplement to services that address other critical reentry needs, such as housing, health care, substance use treatment, and employment."—*Mentoring as a Component of Reentry: Practical Considerations from the Field*

Mentors Can Help Mentees "Plug In"

One of the most significant detriments to a successful reentry after incarceration is lack of support in the community. There are numerous support services available for returning citizens in almost every community, or nearby community, in Idaho but what we are finding in the Free2Succeed program is that although individuals are provided with lists of resources by case managers, POs, reentry specialists, judges, friends, family, etc., it is the lack of knowledge of how to utilize those resources that is an obstacle for many.

Simply not having a phone or transportation or a valid ID is an issue but mentors can connect them to those resources AND assist them in making phone calls and coaching them on what to say, standing with them in long DMV lines, navigating

non-profit assistance, grocery stores, Social Security Administration, churches and other faith-based organizations, higher education institutions, and the list goes on.

The protective factor of being knowledgeable isn't just knowing where a resource is, it is developing the skills needed to utilize a particular resource. Mentors can help.



Thoughts from Mentors

"I currently have a mentee who in the beginning was scared, and quite frankly just overwhelmed with the things that he had to do right after being released. I could immediately sense his stress so, I just jumped right in with him, and we took care of everything that he needed to do. About 2 weeks later we were having coffee filling out some of his job applications. Both of our sons were playing in the kids' area when he looked at me and said, "Shawn. Thank you for everything that you've done. I Prayed to God to help me, and He sent you." The tears welled up in my eyes, and I felt a profound sense of love, and gratitude.

From that moment I knew without a doubt that the Free2Succeed program does make a difference, one mentee at a time. Each one will need different things but, one thing will always remain the same. My desire, and passion to help every mentee that I can. - *Free2Succeed Mentor, Shawn Taiji*

"I think the most important thing to ALWAYS remember is to maintain healthy boundaries. It not only helps the mentor, but it shows the mentee that boundaries are healthy and that you can be successful while on probation/parole. Having healthy boundaries keeps you safe and in balance. If you fall out of balance then you can do more harm than good for either party. I have noticed that the people re-entering the communities will watch us to see if our actions are in a healthy pro-active way...in others words, if we lead by example, hopefully others will follow." -*Free2Succeed Mentor, Selina Chocktoot*

**Mentors can help
others find the road
to success**



Filling a Need with “Darcie’s Closet”

Bambi Calloway has been a mentor with Free2Succeed for about three and a half years and has mentored a number of individuals returning from incarceration. One thing that she noticed was although there were many places for individuals to go in the community for appropriate clothing, her mentees were sometimes feeling stressed out because of some of the “red tape” required to obtain them. Making appointments and filling out forms that require disclosure of sometimes personal and unfavorable information can be daunting for someone who may be only a few hours of being released from prison.

Bambi partnered with the PEER Wellness recovery center in Boise to establish a “clothes closet” named in honor of an individual that Bambi served time with who, unfortunately, has since passed away.

There’s a selfless element to mentoring. The day that someone comes to me with tears in her eyes and says, “No one has ever believed in me or cared for me the way that you do” speaks volumes in itself. - Bambi



*Donations to Darcie’s Closet can be made directly to:
PEER Wellness Recovery Center
5371 W. Franklin Rd in Boise*

At Darcie’s Closet, one can simply show up and get what they need—no questions asked, no forms to fill out, no pressure, and no judgment. It is a no hassle, stress-free environment where several resources are available.



“Day 1” - Simple but Effective

Mark Person knows first-hand how difficult things can be for someone coming out of incarceration—especially after 15 years— because that was his situation. After being granted parole on a very long sentence, he knew there was no chance for screwing up. He requested a mentor and was matched with one in Boise who helped him readjust to life on the outside. Now over four years out, Mark is involved with just about everything: he is a mentor with F2S; recently elected 1st Vice-Commander of the American Legion Posts at ISCI and ISCC; a member of the Board of Directors for PEER Wellness recovery center; volunteers with the Idaho Humane Society IDAPI dog program; regularly speaks to groups of inmates in the prisons; works with legislators and other members of the community towards effective reentry efforts; and is always willing to lend a hand to support the IDOC’s mission.

Mark started his Day 1 program simply to help those he is mentoring have some structure upon release and ensure that they get the essentials needed to put them on the path to a successful reintegration. Mark says:

“Day 1 is simply helping guys get a solid foundation under them as soon as possible that fits their individual needs so that they may focus on obtaining employment in order to pay next month’s rent. As a mentor this is what I am passionate about. While giving them hope and assurance that somebody cares it’s also important to help these guys find often overlooked necessities. I want our returning citizens to be successful and have the opportunities that I’ve had.”

Example of Mark’s Day 1 schedule (which he often adjusts to fit each individual’s needs):

- 0800: Pick up at the prison gate
- 0815: Coffee—get to know each other
- 0830: Call VA Coordinator if mentee is a veteran
- 0900: Pick up vouchers and hygiene bag at IDOC Reentry Center and/or St. Vincent DePaul
- 0930: Probation and Parole office to check in
- 1000: Vets for Success Thrift Store for clothing for those who are veterans
- 1030: Department of Health and Welfare for food stamp card
- 1200: Lunch at Bad Boy Burgers - where everyone there knows Mark by name and what he is doing when he shows up
- 1300: DMV for a state ID card
- After the DMV: Check in to their housing
- 1500: Obtain a food box so they have something to eat.



IDOC Mission

Protect the public, our staff and those within our custody and supervision through safety, accountability, partnerships and providing opportunities for offender change.

Mentoring = IDOC Mission... How??

- ◆ **Protect the public** by being a part of the offender's support system. Successful transition means safer communities.
- ◆ **Protect the public** by providing accountability, trust, and a positive relationship.
- ◆ **Protect the public** by developing partnerships with IDOC staff, faith-based organizations, and other community support groups.
- ◆ **Protect the public** by providing opportunities for the offender to change. Provide comfort and encouragement through difficult and stressful times, ensure the offender attends and completes required programs, seek positive and edifying activities to develop social and problem-solving skills.

Protective Factors

Positive influences that can improve all aspects of an individual's life which counteract the risks associated with crime and victimization

Resilience - adapting to changing environments

Social Connections—positive relationships from positive sources

Concrete Support—recognition of need and ability to meet

Knowledge—developing skills and finding the support and resources needed

Social/Emotional—Developing trust and confidence in self and others

The Mentor Report

Mentors are required to keep the probation and parole officers informed of their mentee's progress and other issues and concerns through regular contact. Sometimes this contact occurs via email or text but on a regular basis, a mentor must submit a Mentor Report at least monthly. The report is structured with information that supports protective factors and focused supervision efforts that POs are working in conjunction with the offender. This information and the reports are considered collateral supervision contacts. When a mentor submits the report, the information is directly uploaded into CIS as a contact note so the PO and other staff have immediate access.

Check out what the report looks like and the information provided by our mentors here: <https://forms.idoc.idaho.gov/Forms/mentorreporting>

Protective Factors

Here is an example of some information taken directly from a recently submitted mentor report regarding the protective factors in a mentee's life and how the mentor is working with him in those areas in conjunction with the conditions of supervision:

Resilience (*coping with life changes*)

He has been setting goals and it's good to see him achieving them. He is balancing being a proud new father, with probation and work as well as classes. And has a great attitude about Life

Healthy Social Connections (*friends, family, church, etc*)

He has been going to AA / NA meetings and has been seeking further counseling and advice in those meetings. He is focused on his sobriety you can tell it is important to him. He realizes what's at stake and the Damage that he's caused in the past.

Concrete Support (*employment, housing, material needs met*)

He's working, paying his rent at the halfway house, and paying off his fines to get his license back and is on the right track. He has advised me that he went to the vineyard supplemental Food Bank and he says that's helped him out. And he's been donating plasma to try to pay off his bills.

Knowledge (*where to go for help, how to do things*)

He had questions about how to set up a bank account oh, what's the difference between a credit union and a big Bank. We also went over how to establish credit, how they figure out your credit score and how important it is to have a bank account so that everything can be seamless in your life as far as paying bills, and wrapping up a lot of responsibilities into one app

Social and Emotional Competence (*appropriate behavior, positive outlook*)

When speaking , corrected himself on his language when he spoke with "French" lol and I did as we both I have a goal of keeping our language as clean as possible being Christian Brothers. He was very polite and was thankful for dinner and the coffee that we had

Other (*general or overall perspective of the mentee and/or mentorship*)

I really think that he's on the right path as far as motivation, mindset, priorities, perspective and goal setting. I told him once he verbalizes a goal then others including me will keep him accountable. He has acknowledged but in the past he has been a procrastinator and I'm trying to get him to be one who commits follow through. He seems to me like he's trying be a responsible young man

The goal is to have mentors working in concert with probation and parole staff and encouraging their mentees to meet the conditions of supervision , connect to community resources, and enhance their lives. "We may be riding in different cars, but at least we will be on the same train heading in the same direction."