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**The imperatives of inmates' rehabilitation programmes: A study of Delta state correctional centres**

Irogbo, Prosper Uyoyou

*Department of Sociology, Delta State University, Abraka – Nigeria.*

Corresponding Email: [prosper.irogbo@delsu.edu.ng](mailto:prosper.irogbo@delsu.edu.ng)

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**Abstract**

*This study critically examines the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs within Nigeria's criminal justice system, focusing on Delta State. The research addresses the gap between public perception and the actual outcomes of these programs in reducing recidivism rates among incarcerated individuals. In achieving these, quantitative research design, primary data was collected using structured questionnaires from 85 respondents, including inmates and correctional officials. The findings revealed a high level of skepticism among the public regarding the efficacy of Delta State's rehabilitation programs. Key challenges identified include shortages of funding, inadequate post-release support, and insufficient staff training. The study emphasizes the importance of evidence-based practices, collaborative approaches, and community involvement in enhancing program effectiveness. The findings underscore the need for policy reforms, resource mobilization, and capacity building within correctional systems to address the multifaceted needs of justice-involved individuals and reduce recidivism rates in the long term. It is therefore recommended that increased funding, staff training, improved program design, comprehensive post-release support, and community engagement.*

**Keywords:** Delta state, Public Perception, Recidivism, Rehabilitation

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**1. Introduction**

In Nigeria, the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes in reducing recidivism among incarcerated individuals has been a subject of growing research (Oroleye, 2012). The Nigerian prison system, now Nigeria Correctional Services, aims to reform convicts and prepare them for successful reintegration into society. However, numerous challenges have hindered these objectives, prompting a critical analysis of the effectiveness of Nigeria's rehabilitation programmes (Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013).

Recidivism rates in Nigeria are high, estimated at 52.4% (Abrifor et al., 2012), up from 37.3% in 2005 (Soyombo, 2009). This issue is compounded by severe prison overcrowding, with an inmate population of 80,883 significantly exceeding the designed capacity of 50,083 (Mbah, 2021). The intersection of overcrowding and

recidivism amplifies the challenges faced by the criminal justice system, making effective rehabilitation critical. Moreover, Nigeria's high criminality score on the Global Organized Crime Index suggests that ex-offenders contribute significantly to crime rates, thus raising questions about the efficacy of rehabilitation programmes (Mbah, 2021).

A study in Edo State revealed that rehabilitation services in Nigerian prisons are neglected and do not adhere to international best practices (Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013). Inmates showed a preference for recreational activities, particularly football, but effective rehabilitation requires therapy, counseling, and skills acquisition (Tanimu, 2010) which are not readily available. Another study in Southwestern Nigeria identified significant hurdles to effective rehabilitation, such as delays in court



procedures, lack of funds, and poor inmate welfare (Alamu & Makinde, 2019).

The Nigerian Prison Service Manual outlines objectives for rehabilitation, including crisis management, training to reduce dependency, and providing adequate recreational facilities (Alamu & Makinde, 2019). Despite these guidelines, high recidivism rates still persist, and can be largely due to funding and resource shortages (Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013; Alamu & Makinde, 2019). Moreover, offering rehabilitation involves professionals from diverse fields, aiming to effect positive change in inmates' attitudes, behavior, and skills for successful reintegration into society (The Nigerian Prison Service Manual, 2011), all of whom may not have received high quality training. In addition, poor welfare conditions in prisons, including inadequate living conditions and substandard healthcare are also believed to impede the rehabilitation process (Ike, Jidong, Ike, & Ayobi, 2023; Uche et al., 2015; Oroleye, 2012).

In light of these, the current study therefore aims to conduct another critical analysis of the effectiveness of Nigeria's rehabilitation programme in reducing recidivism rates among incarcerated individuals in Delta State, to check what has changed or improved over the years.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the implementation of rehabilitation programme in Nigeria's criminal justice system, there remains a significant gap in the rehabilitation process and the effectiveness of these programme in reducing recidivism among incarcerated individuals (Oroleye, 2012). While the existing literature has provided insights into the theoretical aspects of rehabilitation, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive analysis and critical examination of the public's perception on whether these programmes are achieving their intended goals. Recent developments have shown a growing concern among

stakeholders, policymakers, and the general public regarding the impact and outcomes of these rehabilitation efforts (Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013; Alamu & Makinde, 2019).

In light of these recent developments, this study aims to investigate and critically analyze the public perception regarding the effectiveness of Delta State's rehabilitation programme in reducing recidivism. By exploring the views, attitudes, and opinions of the public, including individuals directly impacted by the criminal justice system and their families, this research seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and real-world outcomes (Idowu, 2014). The study will delve into the perceptions of various stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, policymakers, prison administrators, community leaders, and members of the public (Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013; Alamu & Makinde, 2019).

### **Objectives of the Study**

- i. To evaluate public perception of Delta State's rehabilitation programme in reducing recidivism.
- ii. To assess the effectiveness of Delta State's rehabilitation programme in reducing recidivism among incarcerated individuals.
- iii. To recommend evidenced solutions to improving current rehabilitation practices in Delta State.

## **2. Literature Review**

This section focuses on the review of literature relevant to this study. In doing so, it attempts to establish a theoretical framework to explain why offenders' rehabilitation fails or succeeds and how these instances impact the efficacy of rehabilitation programmes.

### **Recidivism**

Recidivism is a multifaceted and significant concept within the criminal justice context, referring to individuals who, after serving time in correctional facilities, engage in criminal activities



again (Thorlindsson & Bernburg, 2004; Drago, Galbiati & Vertova, 2011). This recurring involvement with the criminal justice system highlights potential challenges in the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders (Thorlindsson & Bernburg, 2004). Patterns of criminal relapse are central to this study, which scrutinizes the effectiveness of Nigeria's rehabilitation program. Recidivism serves as both a measure of success and a challenge to the rehabilitation process, offering insights into the dynamics at play post-incarceration (Hamilton, Harris & McCook, 2023). At its core, recidivism encapsulates the recurring pattern of individuals, post-sentence, becoming entangled in criminal activities again. This persistence of criminal behavior after incarceration underscores the complexities of rehabilitation (Drago, Galbiati, & Vertova, 2011).

The study argues that the failure of rehabilitation, due to factors such as failed re-integration and poor rehabilitation exercises, contributes to recidivism (Esperian, 2010). Recidivism extends beyond a binary distinction between criminality and non-criminality, presenting a continuum of behaviors from minor infractions to severe criminal acts (Esperian, 2010). This spectrum highlights the multifaceted nature of post-release experiences for individuals who have served time within the correctional system. Recidivism can encompass a wide array of actions, including minor infractions, misdemeanors, felony offenses, parole or probation violations, and non-criminal missteps (Thorlindson & Bernburg, 2004). Non-criminal missteps, such as failing to secure stable housing, unemployment, or challenges in maintaining healthy social relationships, also hinder successful reintegration (Hoffmann & Ireland, 2004). Understanding these nuanced patterns of criminal relapse provides opportunity to assess the efficacy of rehabilitation programmes in addressing the diverse

needs of individuals post-incarceration (Agnew, 2012). Socio-economic strains, such as non-acceptance back into society and public stigma, can lead to withdrawal, suicide, or retaliatory behavior (Agnew, 2012). By acknowledging the continuum of recidivism, it is possible to shed light on effective aspects of the rehabilitation process and identifies gaps or challenges that require targeted intervention (Esperian, 2010). Meanwhile attention is also paid to patterns of criminal relapse which are central to evaluating the dynamics of recidivism in Nigeria's criminal justice system, and offers a comprehensive lens to assess the success of rehabilitation programmes in breaking the cycle of criminality.

#### **Empirical Review**

##### **Assessment of Effectiveness of Rehabilitation Programmes in Nigeria**

Nwokeoma et al. (2019) examined the efficacy of prison-based cognitive behavioral rehabilitation intervention (PCBRI) in mitigating violent sexual behaviors among sex offenders in Nigerian correctional facilities. The study involved 45 participants evaluated using the Compulsive Sexual Behavior Inventory and Hypersexual Behavior Inventory across three assessment periods. Results indicated that PCBRI significantly decreased violent sexual behaviors among Nigerian sex offenders, maintaining its effectiveness over a six-month follow-up period.

Aliyu, Mustaffa, & Mohd, (2017) explored the role of education in the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates within Nigerian correctional facilities. The research was conducted at the Correctional Services in Keffi, Nasarawa State, involving a sample of 60 inmates from a population of 182. The findings revealed a deficiency in recreational education activities due to the outdated state of correctional facilities, hindering the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates.



Aliyu, K. A. (2018) examined the impact of prison correctional rehabilitation programs on inmate empowerment at Oke Kura prison. The study found that correctional rehabilitation programs play a crucial role in reintegrating inmates into society. However, significant challenges to these programs include social rejection, assimilation difficulties, maintaining program continuity, insufficient training materials, and an inadequate learning environment, all of which negatively affect inmates' learning outcomes and skill application.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted rehabilitation and explain the phenomenon under study (McNeill, 2012). The theory originated in the early 19th century as a response to the punitive approaches of criminal justice systems (Casey, Day, Vess & Ward, 2012; McNeill, 2012).

### **Offender Rehabilitation Theory**

The rehabilitation theory, often celebrated as a cornerstone of correctional systems worldwide, warrants a closer look. This theory suggested that people involved in crime can change and become law-abiding citizens through well-designed interventions (Hyatt & Barnes 2017). While it sounds good in theory, it's not without critics (Ike, Jidong, Ike, & Ayobi, 2023). The proponents of the theory argued that successful offenders' interventions programmes should be proportional to the offender's risk of reoffending. In essence, higher-risk offenders are best to receive more intensive interventions that target criminogenic needs—factors that contribute to criminal behavior, such as substance abuse, lack of education, or antisocial attitudes (McNeill, 2012). Therefore, offenders' rehabilitation theory argues that successful offenders' interventions programmes are those tailored to the learning style, motivation, abilities, and strengths of the offender to maximize effectiveness, including preparing offenders to reintegrate into

society by providing support for housing, employment, and social relationships to help them establish a stable and law-abiding life (Casey, Day, Vess & Ward, 2012).

In the context of this study about Nigeria's rehabilitation programme, there is a need to critically examine rehabilitation theory and how it plays out in practice. One big criticism is that this theory sets unrealistic expectations: It assumes that all criminals can be turned into model citizens through rehabilitation. There are current arguments that not everyone can change, and this theory might focus too much on rehabilitation while neglecting other important goals like deterring crime (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). In this particular study, it is of interest to understand how the public perceive these rehabilitation programme, meanwhile matching these perceptions to evidence that suggest offenders are hardly transformed during and after experiencing rehabilitation programme (Ike, Jidong, Ike, & Ayobi, 2023). Thus, current pressures that every criminal can be completely changed may negatively impact how public judge the programme. Accordingly, it is important to find out if public's perception lines up with the reality of how these programme work (Ike, Jidong, Ike, & Ayobi, 2023).

Similarly, there are criticisms that there is not enough solid evidence to back up the claims of the rehabilitation theory. Critics argue that despite current arguments that about transformation, studies often struggle to show clear reductions in repeat offenses because of rehabilitation programme (Lipsey, 1992). This directly connects to our study's second objective: to determine if Nigeria's rehabilitation programme actually work. While the propositions of the rehabilitation theory stand at a side, this study intends to look closely at the evidence to confirm if the theory's promises have produced results



within Nigerian correctional context (Hyatt & Barnes 2017).

Additionally, rehabilitation theory argues that people involved in crime can change and become law-abiding citizens through well-designed interventions, nonetheless, these interventions are heavily resources driven which evidence suggests are critically lacking in Nigeria on a universal scale (Hyatt & Barnes 2017). Unavailability of such resources impact quality results: Offenders lack the tools, staff, expertise-engagement and resources to meaningfully internalize core socio-economic values that support transformational development. Prison officials and social works also often lack the evidence-based methodologies to serve the unique needs of each offender (Hyatt & Barnes 2017). Offenders often differ dynamically on socio-demographic grounds, worldviews and philosophy of punishment, states and corrections. Technically, certain offenders' way as well find no legitimacy in government or the idea of 'society'. This introduces a typical complex of appropriate rehabilitation model (Hyatt & Barnes 2017). Most existing rehabilitation programme are often pre-defined. A pre-defined model assumes that what works for "subject A" applies to "subject B", hence develop a standardized measurement across all correctional facilities. Such generic rehabilitation strategy though may be applicable to only a few offenders, does not 'fit all'. Similarly, experts may underperform in certain circumstances, including the impact of poor welfare treatment from State to officials (Alamu & Makinde, 2019). Such "one-size-fits-all" approach is too shallow and needs further expansion. Putting these factors into account, it becomes clear that the problems can get in the way of running effective rehabilitation programme (Hyatt & Barnes 2017). Thus, it is crucial to take on a practical overview of the challenges these programme face in Nigeria. The overriding

assumption is that if there is not enough money, staff, resources and expertise this may remarkably impact how well these programme work. This study therefore attempts to evaluate the relationship between these practical issues against the idealized expectations of rehabilitation (Hyatt & Barnes 2017).

### **3. Methodology**

The study employs a cross-sectional research design and gathers primary data through structured questionnaires to quantify the efficacy of rehabilitation programmes in Delta State. Currently, the state houses five correctional facilities in Warri, Ogwashi-uku, Kwale, Sapele, and Agbor. Based on the available statistics, there are 2,371 inmates in Delta State Corrections in July 2023, hence the population is taken as  $N= 2,371$ . The sample size for the study was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. The derived sample size was set at 85 respondents. By using a systematic sampling technique, 40 male and 30 female prisoners were selected from the Correctional Centres, along with 15 officials, hence  $n=85$ . Data were collected in person with the aid of a correctional officials for organization and safety. The structured questionnaire included 15 items across three sections: demographics, study objectives for prisoners, and policy recommendations for officials. Adopting descriptive statistics-percentages and frequency tables, data were analyzed using SPSS Version 27 to address the study's objectives. Informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were ensured, adhering strictly to ethical guidelines to protect participants' rights and wellbeing.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

This section deals with the presentation and analysis of data retrieved from field survey. The analysis is presented in tables and each item of the table calculated for their relative frequency, percentage, total



frequency and total percentages. The analysis is presented in sections as itemized on the instrument of data collection.

Table 1: Demographic Analysis of Respondents

Demographic Questions	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Role	<i>Inmate</i>	70	82.35
	<i>Correctional Official</i>	15	17.65
Total		<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>
Which of these age groups best describe you?	<i>18-24 years</i>	27	31.76
	<i>25-34 years</i>	10	11.76
	<i>35-44 years</i>	8	9.41
	<i>45-54 years</i>	11	12.94
	<i>55-64 years</i>	18	21.18
	<i>65 years and above</i>	11	12.94
Total		<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>
What is your sex?	<i>Male</i>	49	57.65
	<i>Female</i>	36	42.35
Total		<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>
What is your highest education attained?	<i>No Formal Education</i>	10	11.76
	<i>Primary Education</i>	15	17.65
	<i>Secondary Education</i>	47	55.29
	<i>Tertiary Education</i>	13	15.29
Total		<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>
What is your employment status?	<i>Unemployed Inmates</i>	72	84.44
	<i>Employed Correctional Officers</i>	13	15.56
	<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author’s Survey, 2024

The respondents include 70 inmates and 15 correctional officials. The largest age group is 18-24 years (31.76%), followed by 55-64 years (21.18%). Males comprise 57.65% of respondents, and 55.29% have completed secondary education. Most respondents (84.44%) are unemployed inmates, while 15.96% are employed correctional officers.

Table 2: Public perception of Delta State’s Rehabilitation Programme

Question	Frequency	Percentage (%)
5. How familiar are you with Delta State’s rehabilitation programme for incarcerated individuals?		
<i>Very familiar</i>	85	100
<i>Somewhat familiar</i>	0	0
<i>Not very familiar</i>	0	0
<i>Not at all familiar</i>	0	0
Total	85	100
6. In your opinion, how effective is the rehabilitation programme in reducing recidivism (re-offending) among previously incarcerated individuals?		



Question	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Very effective</i>	13	15.29
<i>Somewhat effective</i>	9	10.59
<i>Neutral</i>	5	5.88
<i>Somewhat ineffective</i>	30	35.29
<i>Very ineffective</i>	28	32.94
Total	85	100
7. To what extent do you believe that the rehabilitation programme addresses the root causes of criminal behavior?		
<i>To a great extent</i>	1	1.18
<i>To some extent</i>	3	3.53
<i>Neutral</i>	3	3.53
<i>To a little extent</i>	15	17.65
<i>Not at all</i>	63	74.12
Total	85	100
8. How would you rate the overall public support for the rehabilitation programme in Delta State in its current state?		
<i>Very high</i>	8	9.41
<i>High</i>	9	10.59
<i>Moderate</i>	3	3.53
<i>Low</i>	32	37.65
<i>Very low</i>	33	38.82
Total	85	100

Source: Author’s Survey, 2024

All 85 respondents are familiar with Delta State's rehabilitation program. Opinions on its effectiveness vary: 15.29% find it very effective, 10.59% somewhat effective, while 68.23% view it as somewhat or very ineffective. Most respondents (74.12%) believe it fails to address the root causes of criminal behavior, with only 1.18% thinking it does so to a great extent. Public support for the program is perceived as low, with 37.65% rating it low and 38.82% very low, while only 20% rate it moderate to very high. This indicates widespread skepticism about the program's effectiveness and public backing.

**Effectiveness of the Rehabilitation Programme**

Opinions on the current rehabilitation program's sufficiency for reintegration vary. Only 4.71% strongly agree, and 1.18% agree that it provides adequate support, while 58.82% disagree, and 24.71% strongly disagree. Most respondents (64.71%) find educational and vocational training most effective in reducing recidivism, followed by psychological counseling (24.71%). Key challenges include lack of funding (41.18%), post-release support (24.71%), and insufficient staff training (23.53%). Re-offending rates are perceived as high, with 44.71% believing rehabilitated individuals often re-offend and 30.59% believing it happens very often. These findings emphasize the need for improved support and resources to enhance the program's effectiveness.



**Table 3: Recommendations for Improvement**

Question	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>13. What improvements would you suggest to enhance the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programme in Delta State? (Select all that apply)</b>		
<i>Increased funding</i>	21	25.00
<i>Better staff training</i>	8	9.52
<i>Enhanced post-release support</i>	23	27.38
<i>Improved programme design</i>	7	8.33
<i>More comprehensive treatment options</i>	3	3.57
<i>Community involvement and support</i>	22	26.19
<i>Other (please specify)</i>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>14. How important is community involvement in the success of rehabilitation programmes?</b>		
<i>Very important</i>	80	94.12
<i>Important</i>	4	4.71
<i>Neutral</i>	1	1.18
<i>Unimportant</i>	0	0.00
<i>Very unimportant</i>	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author’s Survey, 2024

Respondents suggested several improvements for the Delta State rehabilitation program. Increased funding was recommended by 25%, enhanced post-release support by 27.38%, and greater community involvement by 26.19%. Other suggestions included better staff training (9.52%), improved program design (8.33%), and more comprehensive treatment options (3.57%). A vast majority (94.12%) emphasized the importance of community involvement, while 4.71% considered it important, highlighting the critical role of community support in rehabilitation efforts. Only 1.18% remained neutral on this aspect. These recommendations stressed the need for increased resources and community engagement to enhance the program's effectiveness.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings reflect the intersection between public opinion and effective correctional practices in the

implementation of rehabilitation programmes for correctional inmate. There is a clear indication that public perception significantly influences policy support, funding allocation, and community engagement in rehabilitation efforts, as noted by Roberts and Yeager (2020). They argue that understanding public opinion is essential for developing and implementing successful correctional policies, and that public support can drive the political will needed to fund and sustain rehabilitation programmes, which in turn impacts their effectiveness and reach. Based on the findings, a great deal of gap is observed to between both in the study area.

The theory of perceived effectiveness, as outlined by Andrews and Bonta (2010), posits that public perception of rehabilitation programmes is influenced by several factors. These include programme clarity, evidence of effectiveness, and alignment with societal values. Hence, when rehabilitation programmes are clearly communicated and demonstrably effective,





they are more likely to gain public support. Additionally, if these programmes align with the broader values and beliefs of the community, such as justice, fairness, and the possibility of change, they are more likely to be endorsed by the public. The current analysis finds that these factors do not currently define the study area's programmes.

The survey results also revealed a stark contrast between high familiarity with Delta State's rehabilitation programme and low perceived effectiveness. This incongruence underscores the importance of targeted communication strategies and evidence-based messaging. High familiarity indicates that the public is aware of the rehabilitation efforts in Delta State, but the low perceived effectiveness suggests that this awareness does not translate into confidence in the program's outcomes.

As Palmer and Hollin (2021) emphasize the role of effective communication strategies in enhancing public trust, dispelling misconceptions, and fostering informed decision-making regarding rehabilitation policies and practices, further arguing that clear, consistent, and transparent communication can bridge the gap between public awareness and perceived effectiveness, the current analysis indicates these communication strategies are indeed lost.

The challenges identified in the survey findings align with key principles of evidence-based correctional practices. Lack of funding, inadequate staffing, and programmatic limitations have been widely documented as barriers to effective rehabilitation (Taxman & Marlowe, 2020). The theory of effective intervention, as proposed by Andrews, Dowden, and Gendreau (1999), emphasizes the importance of resource allocation, staff training, and program quality in achieving positive outcomes.

The critical analysis of these challenges emphasizes the need for policy reforms,

resource mobilization, and capacity building within correctional systems. Literature by Taxman and Belenko (2019) suggests that investments in evidence-based practices, such as cognitive-behavioral interventions, vocational training, and post-release support, can significantly reduce recidivism rates and improve offender reintegration outcomes.

The recommendations provided by respondents align with collaborative models of rehabilitation and community-based interventions. The emphasis on increased funding, staff training, post-release support, and community involvement resonates with the principles of collaborative justice (Latessa et al., 2017). Collaborative justice underscores partnerships between justice agencies, community stakeholders, and service providers to address the multifaceted needs of justice-involved individuals.

Literature by Latessa and Smith (2019) supports the notion that community involvement, coupled with evidence-based interventions, enhances rehabilitation outcomes and promotes public safety. The critical discussion emphasizes the role of collaborative approaches in bridging the gap between policy, practice, and community expectations.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study reveals a high level of public skepticism toward Delta State's rehabilitation programmes by highlighting their perceived ineffectiveness in curbing recidivism and addressing root causes of crime. Insufficient support and resources post-release were noted to hinder successful reintegration and necessitated reforms like vocational training and community involvement. Collaborative justice models and evidence-based practices, alongside community engagement and strategic resource allocation, are nonetheless viewed as vital for enhancing rehabilitation's efficacy and reducing recidivism on the long-term.



Based on the findings and conclusions of this research, several recommendations were proposed to enhance the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes in Delta State.

Firstly, there is a need for increased financial support for rehabilitation programmes to address resource gaps, improve infrastructure, and expand services for incarcerated individuals.

Secondly, investing in staff training, professional development, and capacity building initiatives can enhance the quality of services provided within correctional facilities.

Thirdly, the design of rehabilitation programmes should be evidence-based, tailored to individual needs, and focused on outcomes measurement to ensure effectiveness and accountability.

Fourthly developing comprehensive post-release support systems, including housing assistance, employment opportunities, counseling services, and community integration programmes, is crucial for successful reintegration and reducing recidivism.

Lastly, community Engagement: Fostering partnerships with community organizations, NGOs, faith-based groups, and local stakeholders to promote community involvement, support reintegration efforts, and reduce stigma associated with incarceration are equally acceptable.

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