

# SECURE INTERNET TECHNOLOGY:

## A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR PRERELEASE AND POSTRELEASE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMMING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM RATES

White Paper

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IPPC TECHNOLOGIES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The leading contributors associated with the skyrocketing socioeconomic costs of incarceration and recidivism are lack of education and marketable job skills. The evidence is clear that providing education and job training to incarcerated individuals reduces recidivism, reduces the direct and indirect cost to taxpayers, and provides a positive return on investment by rehabilitating people who have been incarcerated to become contributing members of society.

Passing legislation such as the First Step Act (P.L. 115-391) in 2018 with its focus on increasing rehabilitation opportunities and decreasing long sentencing requirements, and the Second Chance Act (P.L. 110-119) in 2008 and reauthorized in 2018 are the first steps to reversing the high incarceration and recidivism rates in the United States.

However, evidence shows that the U.S. reentry model remains inequitable, insufficient, and antiquated. “The fragmented reentry system has real, negative impacts on people who seek to rebuild their lives after incarceration.... having a criminal record creates serious barriers that prevent access to many services and opportunities, including housing, education, and employment” (Vorpahl, A. 2022).

The current model is inefficient and ineffective, resulting in outcomes that are counterproductive to the goal of reducing recidivism even for the most committed individuals. Changing outcomes requires a paradigm shift. This requires modernizing reentry programs to include access to secure Internet resources that provide state-of-the-art programming that:

- Allows people to be more competitive in the marketplace;
- Provides pro-social resources that increase access to health and social services; and,
- Offers continuity of services that provide a continuum of support with ongoing access to employment, health care treatment, and housing resources.

This white paper discusses key findings: the direct and indirect costs of incarceration and recidivism rates, how these costs are exacerbated by the revolving door of recidivism, what the literature states about the rate of return on investing in education and job training programs, and how secure Internet technology is a key solution to criminal justice reform.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Despite a decline in recent years, the United States continues to have the highest incarceration and recidivism rates worldwide (Minton, 2021; Flores, 2018).
- The additional socioeconomic cost associated with individuals being involved with the criminal justice system and incarcerated, including lost earnings, adverse health effects, and damage to families, is estimated to be \$1.2 trillion (Hayes, 2020).
- From 2000 to 2016, the number of people housed in private prisons increased five times faster than the total prison population (Gotsch, 2018).
- Private Prisons incarcerated 99,754 individuals in 2020, representing 8% of the total state and federal prison populations. Since 2000, the number of people housed in private prisons increased by 14% (Buday & Nellis, 2022).
- Most states spend more money incarcerating individuals per person than they do on educating K-12 students (Stullich, 2016).
- According to the National Institute of Justice, in 2014, over 76.6% of persons released from prisons returned to prison (Durose, 2014).
- Approximately 68% of inmates in state prisons lack a high school diploma. Lack of education, criminal history, and deficient job skills exacerbates recidivism and increases the societal cost burden to taxpayers (Steurer, 2019).
- Research from the Department of Policy Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles found that spending \$1 million on incarceration will prevent about 350 crimes. Whereas, if the same \$1 million was invested in prison education programs, 600 crimes would be prevented (Bazos, A. 2004).
- Structural barriers contribute to increased costs of incarceration and recidivism. These barriers include, but are not limited to, a lack of continuity of services post-release, a systemic bias in hiring practices, and homelessness. These structural barriers create a cycle of punishment and socioeconomic costs, resulting in unemployment, lost earnings and tax revenue, and cross-generational poverty. These barriers only perpetuate the cycle of recidivism and result in increased direct and indirect costs to taxpayers (Couloute, 2018; Martin, 2017).

# UNSUSTAINABLE COST OF HIGH INCARCERATION AND RECIDIVISM RATES

"Correctional education programs provide incarcerated individuals with the skills and knowledge essential to their futures."

- Arne Duncan  
U.S. Secretary of Education

- Between 1972 and 2009, the prison population grew 700% resulting in taxpayers now spending nearly \$300 billion annually on a Criminal Justice System that incarcerates approximately 2.2 million people ([Ghandnoosh](#), 2019).
- The U.S. spends \$81 billion a year on mass incarceration, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and that figure might be an underestimate. In 2017, the Prison Policy Initiative estimated the actual cost to state and federal governments and impacted families is roughly \$182 billion. ([Kuhn](#), 2021).
- The additional socioeconomic cost associated with lost earnings, adverse health effects, and damage to families is estimated to be \$1.2 trillion ([Hayes](#), 2020). Utilizing the 2020 U.S. population of 330 million people, the total cost of incarceration averages \$3,630 per U.S. citizen per year. ([US Census Bureau](#), 2020)
- The exploding prison population has resulted in unsustainable costs to taxpayers, where states now spend more on incarceration than on secondary education. ([Stullich](#), 2016).

# THE REVOLVING DOOR OF RECIDIVISM

According to the National Institute of Justice, in 2014, over 76.6% of persons released from prisons returned to prison. The Bureau of Justice Statistics' 10-year follow-up report on recidivism ([Antenangeli, 2018](#)) found that in 2008, of 400,000 prisoners released in 24 States:

- 66% were rearrested within 3 years, based on ten years;
- 82% were rearrested within 10 years; and,
- 61% percent returned to prison within 10 years for violating parole or probation or having a new sentence.

Studies conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics ([2014](#)) found that within the first year of release,

- 57% of prisoners were rearrested;
- 68% of released prisoners were rearrested within 3 years of release; and,
- 77% were rearrested within 5 years of release ([NPEP, 2021](#)).

This revolving cycle of incarceration is illustrated below and is perpetuated by the fact the U.S. reentry model remains inequitable and insufficient. This fragmented reentry system has real, negative impacts on people who seek to rebuild their lives after incarceration. It is inefficient and ineffective in assisting with accessing employment, health care, treatment, and housing ([Vorpahl, A. 2022](#)).



# EVIDENCE-BASED CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS REDUCE RECIDIVISM

**“As the world has become more digital, the world inside our state’s correctional facilities has lagged behind. To prepare people for release, students inside Washington state correctional facilities need secure access to the same digital information and tools used by students on college campuses.”**

**- (Strange, C., & Armbruster, D. 2021).**

According to the RAND Corporation (2013), providing incarcerated individuals with education has shown to be effective in reducing crime, recidivism rates, and incarceration costs. Findings include:

- Greater participation in education programs correlated closely with lower recidivism rates. Education reduced an individual’s chances of returning to prison by 43% when compared with someone who did not receive an education while incarcerated;
- The estimated average annual cost of correctional education programs per incarcerated participant in 2008 was between \$1,400 and \$1,744 (RAND, 2013).

A more recent study (Bender, 2018) supports the RAND findings and emphasizes that high recidivism is exacerbated by lower educational attainment. This study illustrates the following:

- 41% of incarcerated individuals do not hold a high school diploma;
- Formerly incarcerated individuals with low levels of education often find themselves without the financial resources or social support systems upon their release from prison and therefore are more vulnerable to committing criminal acts rather than becoming reintegrated into society; and,
- The significant personal benefits of prison education include increased personal income, lower unemployment, greater political engagement and volunteerism, and improved health outcomes.

Yale University and the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the BPI program, which has offered college courses to incarcerated students since 1999 in six New York correctional facilities. Their findings indicate that:

- Recidivism was reduced by 38% for individuals who participated in BPI programs (Denney, 2021).
- For every \$1 invested in prison education, there was a \$4 to \$5 reduction in future incarceration costs.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy benefit-cost analysis for Adult Criminal Justice reports that the program with the highest rate of return is correctional education, specifically post-secondary education ([Sinclair, 2019](#)). However, modernizing the criminal justice programs to meet the increasing utilization of technology now poses a significant barrier to successful prison-based education, job training, and prerelease programs.



# SECURE INTERNET: A PARADIGM CHANGE FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

**“Modernizing how criminal justice programs work, based on the use of secure Internet access that provides continuity of rehabilitation, education, job training, health, and housing assistance is the most feasible solution to decreasing the rates of incarceration, recidivism, and reducing costs.”**

**- Cheryl Strange  
Secretary, State of Washington Department of Corrections**

To make better use of taxpayers' dollars and reduce the cost of incarceration and recidivism rates, the Second Chance Act was originally signed into law by President GW Bush in April 2008 ([H.R.1593](#), 2007, [P.L. 110-199](#)). The purpose of the Second Chance Act is to reduce recidivism, increase public safety, and assist states and communities address the growing population of inmates returning to communities. The focus has been placed on four areas: jobs, housing, substance abuse/mental health treatment, and families.

In 2018, President Trump signed into law the First Step Act ([P.L. 115-391](#)). The act has three major components: (1) correctional reform via the establishment of a risk and needs assessment system in the Bureau of Prisons, (2) sentencing reform via changes to penalties for some federal offenses, and (3) the reauthorization of the Second Chance Act of 2007 ([P.L. 110-199](#)) ([James](#), 2019). The act also contains a series of other criminal justice-related provisions establishing significant changes to federal sentencing laws, as well as improvements to programs that aim to reduce recidivism and provide support to people involved in the criminal justice system.

Internet access is essential for correctional institutions to modernize programming and accomplish the goals of the First Step Act and the Second Chance Act. However, this creates a conundrum for correctional institutions, which are tasked with avoiding risk exposure that is associated with providing incarcerated individuals access to the Internet. Secure Internet solutions are a way to mitigate this risk and provide access to the Internet without compromising the institutions' safety and security.

Secure Internet, offered as a turnkey solution, has been available through the private sector (IPPC's SecureLearn) since 2007. This technology was developed specifically to comply with the strict security standards required by the criminal justice system. This provides secure and safe access to consistent platforms of affordable, up-to-date, quality education and job training programming.

This increases effectiveness and efficiencies, as well as parity and equality for all populations (men/women, black/white/Hispanic/Asian, etc.) across all criminal justice programs (prison, supervised release, halfway houses, alternative sentencing, etc). Additionally, this technology produces live data metrics essential for programs and policy evaluation.

In 2019, the State of Washington was the first state to create a legislative mandate for the Department of Corrections to propose a pilot project to develop and implement an evidence-based secure Internet demonstration project (Sinclair & Armbruster, 2019). The State of Washington spent considerable time and resources developing a secure Internet network at a comparable cost to more expansive private sector options. The State of Washington Department of Corrections pilot program was successful in providing access to current, relevant, and dynamic educational content without any security breaches. Ten incarcerated women earned web development certifications from Tacoma Community College not otherwise attainable without access to the Internet (Strange & Armbruster, 2021).

A significant finding from the State of Washington's pilot project was the conclusion that "modernizing how criminal justice programs work, based on the use of secure Internet access that provides continuity of rehabilitation, education, job training, health, and housing assistance is the most feasible solution to decreasing the rates of incarceration, recidivism, and reducing costs" (Strange & Armbruster, 2021).

The Second Chance Act creates incentives for the expansion of secure Internet technology, as is evident in the recently released Bureau of Justice Administration FY 2022 Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes Request for Assistance (RFA). The purpose of this RFA is to "improve reentry education and employment outcomes and to enhance the correction systems' ability to implement and expand education and employment programs that serve individuals during incarceration and throughout their period of reentry into the community."

This RFA includes specific language about the modernization of criminal justice programs that can be achieved through establishing restricted Internet access relating to awards involving employment training and creating a continuum of services that (1) prioritizes increasing correction education, and (2) Improves employment services and access to pre-and post-release programming.

## SUMMARY

After decades of increasing incarceration and recidivism rates that have led to unsustainable costs to taxpayers, evidence shows investing in up-to-date, state-of-the-art education and job skills training is a critical and cost-effective solution to reversing decades-old trends. However, correctional programming has remained stagnated and antiquated.

The First Step Act and the Second Chance Act reflect a shift in public policy and provide the financial resources to modernize antiquated criminal justice programs and reverse increasing recidivism rates. While the technologies existed to support safe and secure Internet use, it has only been in recent years that correctional agencies have considered leveraging secure Internet technology to effectuate these goals, as evidenced by the State of Washington Department of Corrections demonstration project.

Investing in outsourced secure Internet technology is a paradigm shift to modernizing criminal justice programming. Compared to a jurisdictional model, e.g. State of Washington, outsourcing secure Internet achieves the goal of the legislative acts for numerous reasons:

- It can be tailored to the specific needs of each individual, providing a continuity of resources related to rehabilitation, education, job training, health, and housing assistance;
- It bridges jurisdictional barriers and provides consistency and continuity of programs, which are tied to the individual, not a specific agency; It is not limited to jurisdictional budgetary constraints, which limit access;
- It achieves economies of scale by streamlining resources, technological upgrades, maintenance, platform customizations, and content licensing; and most importantly,
- It can provide real-time multi-state, multi-site, multi-program outcome data analysis for evaluating return on investment of criminal justice programs, that were designed to rehabilitate individuals involved in the criminal justice system, from being a tax burden to income-producing, taxpaying members of society.

# LEARN MORE ABOUT SECURE INTERNET TECHNOLOGY AND SOLUTIONS

Please contact IPPC Technologies or visit the SecureLearn website for more information about secure Internet technology specifically developed for the criminal justice system.

SecureLearn provides:

- An Internet platform that leverages patented cybersecurity monitoring and control tools that manages security throughout every layer of connectivity and access;
- A turnkey solution which minimizes onsite equipment and staffing burdens;
- Flexibility and adaptability to support employment training and certification needs to meet regional job demands;
- Live outcome data analysis which can be used by criminal justice systems and policymakers for evidence-based programming and data-informed decisions making; and,
- The ability to provide a continuum of pre-and post-release education, employment training, health, and social services.

## Contact Us

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