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# Introduction

A majority of inmates released from the Chester County Prison return to the Coatesville community. Coatesville continues to have the highest recidivism rate in Chester County. Simply stated, Coatesville is a revolving door for those who continue in the vicious cycle of crime and incarceration. This is the cycle we are working to break.

New Mornings Reentry Services currently works with inmates housed at the Chester County Prison/Correctional Center who are returning to the Coatesville area. Our caseworker, Janis McElwee, serves as the initial contact with the inmates and continues to work with them upon their release. The inmates we work with have varied backgrounds and are serving time for varied offenses.

Janis assists the inmates by helping to remove some of the barriers they will face upon their release. That assistance can include help in obtaining personal ID, essential medications at time of release, benefits, manuals to re-apply for their driver's license, referrals to local agencies and training centers, and much more. Janis also organizes various workshops for the inmates to help them in the area of job readiness. The opportunity to receive a mentor is presented by Janis when she meets with the inmates, giving them the option to accept or decline that aspect of our program.

Another aspect of New Mornings is the *Fresh Start* course that is open to all inmates but is mandatory for the inmate who chooses to have a mentor as long as the classes are being held during their time of incarceration. These faith-based classes help the inmates learn how to think differently and how to make different choices than those they made in the past.

If you are reading this you have either prayerfully made the decision to mentor one of those individuals reentering the community, or you are at least considering the possibility. In either case, we thank you for your willingness and boldness to consider sharing your faith and taking the time to make a difference in the life of someone who has been caught up in that revolving door. Working with this population is not for the faint-hearted. It can be quite challenging and frustrating but it can also be very rewarding to watch a person's life be transformed as they choose to do life God's way. One transformed life is a stepping stone to a transformed community.

We pray that the following pages will serve to both educate and equip you to be an effective faith-based mentor to the previously incarcerated.

Thank you again for your willingness to take on such an essential role in this effort to *break the unseen chains that bind* those whose lives have been held captive by the vicious cycle of crime and incarceration.

You may contact me at 610-380-1587 or [cmcnamara@QuietRevolution.org](mailto:cmcnamara@QuietRevolution.org) with any questions concerning this material and/or the mentoring program.

Blessings,

*Christine Mc Namara*

Director of Resource Development

# Some Facts to Ponder

Having knowledge about the judicial system is not essential to mentor but being aware of some basics can be very helpful when your mentee shares what they have gone through in the past. It can also be helpful in understanding any restrictions they may have to adhere to in the present.

## In-House Population

- According to the *Pennsylvania Department of Correction's January 2006 Snapshot In House Report* Chester County Prison's **total population** was 946. 872 Males and 74 Females.
- According to the *Pennsylvania Department of Corrections County Jail Statistical Data* Chester County Prison's average **daily** inmate population is 909 and the combined inmate population is 50% minorities.

## Inmate Statistics

- Average age of inmates is between **25-39 years old**.
- **Mental health disorders** are more common among the inmate population than the general population and the rate of inmates testing positive for **HIV virus is 5x the rate** of the general population.
- National statistics show that inmates in local jails have an **8<sup>th</sup> grade education or less**. 33% have some high school and only 25% graduated high school.

## The Cost

- **Average daily cost per inmate in Chester County Prison** is reported to be **\$61.00 - \$64.00**.
  - Total daily cost to house the incarcerated is \$50,000+ - 60,000+.
  - Total **annual cost** is approximately **20,000,000+**.
  - Chester County Prison is in the process of completing a \$30 million building project in order to keep up with the growing prison population.

## Recidivism

- According to Webster's Dictionary the definition of recidivism is: *a tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behavior; especially: relapse into criminal behavior.*
- According to the PA Department of Corrections **5 out of 8** of those entering prison are reentering for violations of parole.
- According to Chester County Prison **most of the inmates released from the prison will return to the Coatesville area**.