

# McCracken County Public Library Reentry Toolkits

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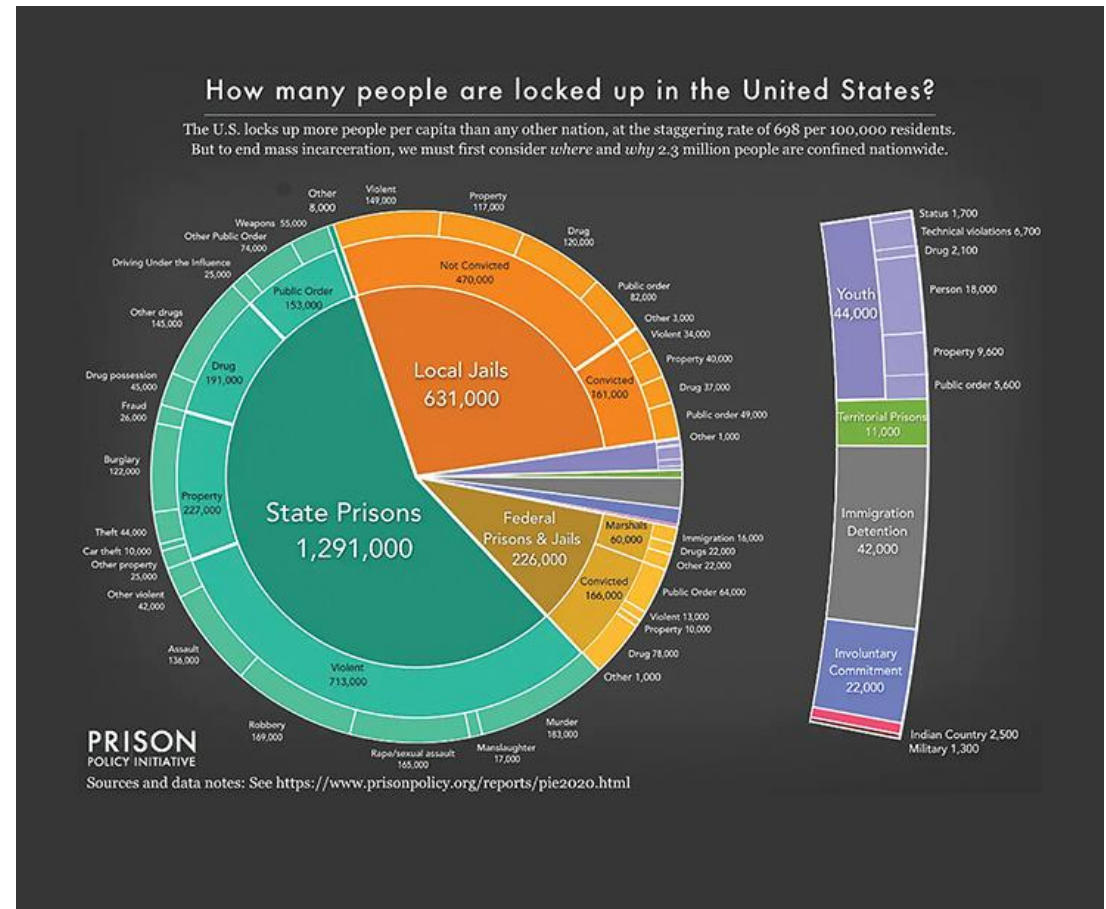


# Library Services for People Experiencing Incarceration

**“It is not only the books that I appreciate; more important to me is the appreciation that I have for you that you would even think of, or care about, other people that are incarcerated. To many people, except for family or close friends, prisoners are out-of-sight, out-of-mind.”** Quote from *Dear Books to Prisoners: Letters from the Incarcerated*

Makely and Austin found the following examples of services being provided by academic and public libraries:

- Reentry career fairs
- Presenting to staff and inmates on library services
- Offering legal information and reference services
- Plans to teach early literacy skills to parents
- Posting resource lists



Jordan-Makely, C., & Austin, J. (2021, September). OUTSIDE AND IN: How libraries are providing services for people impacted by incarceration. *Library Journal*, 146(9), 21+. [https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A674712095/AONE?u=wash\\_main&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=acb7fab5](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A674712095/AONE?u=wash_main&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=acb7fab5)

# The American Dream Literacy Initiative grant

- The ALA and the Dollar General Literacy Association
- Focus is on ESL, job training, adult literacy, and computer access and training
- Award was \$5,000
- Required webinar participation, Project Outcome participation



THE **American Dream**  
**Literacy Initiative**



# Community partners

## West Kentucky Reentry Council

- Members from many social service orgs
- Convened and led by Career Services
- We promote the program in the meetings and by sending out flyers

## United Way

- Helped us by promoting the program to their users
- They provided information for the kits' resource guides

# Getting Started

- We already had an existing digital toolboxes program
- Longstanding outreach work with local recovery centers, reentry council
- Identifying the need for phone services while our doors were closed due to covid

# Digital toolbox

Our existing toolkits include:

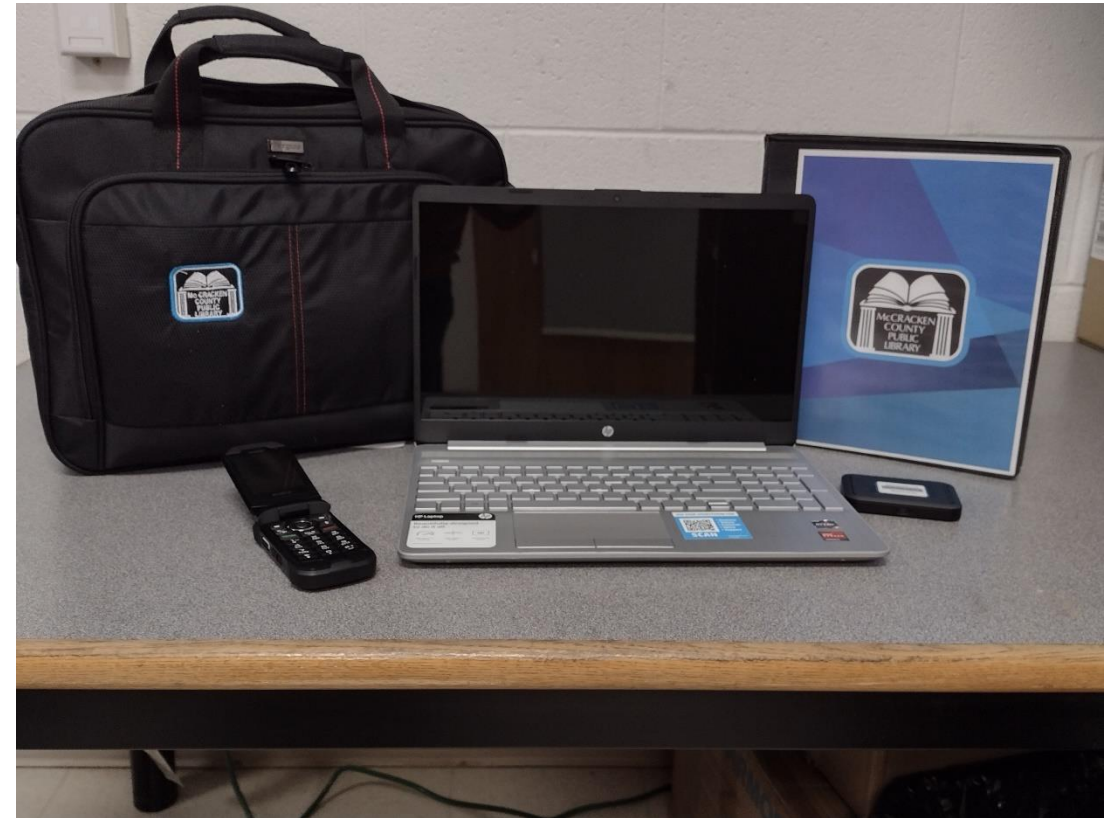
- A laptop
- Mobile hotspot
- A mouse
- A flash drive
- Carrying case

The toolboxes checkout for three months at a time.

This program was in place for a few years pre-pandemic.

# What's in the kit

- A laptop (8GB, 64 bit, Windows)
- Hotpot (from Mobile Beacon)
- Flip phone
- Mouse
- Flash drive
- Resource book
- Carrying case



# Phones

- Verizon service
- The cost of phone and activation were waived
- DuraXV Extreme with Camera
- Our plan covers voice and text for \$30 a month, BUT-
- These flip phones have internet access, and can blow through the small amount of data quickly.
- We are now considering whether we want to keep the existing plans, drop the phones, or go to a slightly higher (\$40) plan to cover the data.



# The software

- The usual Office programs (Word, Excel, Powerpoint)
- NetNanny for filtering
- Deep Freeze by Faronics to wipe the computer between uses
- Adobe PDF Reader
- The computers come with Edge, but we add Firefox and Chrome
- Absolute for security (tracking lost laptops)

# Information included in the kit, 1

## The resource book

- McCracken County Resource Guide from KY's Division of Reentry Services.
- Info on library services; how to use the laptop, flash drive, and hotspot; how to get more help.
- Brochures from other local service organizations.

# Information included in the kit, 2

## Digital skills info on the computers

- There are links on the desktop to some of our YouTube classes on basic digital skills and job-hunting.
- A link to a digital skills checklist on our website.
- A powerpoint from Grow With Google on digital skills.

# Promotion

- One requirement of the grant was to let every Dollar General Store in the area know that we won a grant.
- We made half-page flyers to go to the Dollar Stores and sent them out to local agencies.
- The grant provided a press release to be completed by us; we sent it out to local media.
- We took the flyers to the local jail.
- We were interviewed by Programming Librarian, and a newspaper in our region saw that and interviewed us.
- We've put up flyers in-house at two desks in adult services.

# Supply chain issues

- We had a long wait for our laptops, and while we were looking, the price went up.
- When we realized late that we could get a fifth toolkit, we had to get a refurbished laptop and had a long wait on the hotspot.
- It interfered with our promotion, since we started promoting without a firm begin date.

# Patron use

- Patron use has been much lower than expected. The existing toolbox program has a long wait list, and we thought that 4-5 reentry kits wouldn't be enough.
- We've had some response from the flyers left at the jail, some from people seeing the in-house flyers, and some patrons are referred by library staff.
- The kits have been used by people trying to finish online course work and find jobs.

# Possible problems

- Do people know they exist?
- Do people who are interested know how easy it is to get a library card? Or how to place a hold and pick it up?
- Is there less need than we thought?
- Are people with unstable living conditions worried about loss/damage and the accompanying fees?
- Are people who would like to get this not able to get to the library when it is open?
- Do people who can come prefer to use our desktops with staff help?

# Going forward

- We'll continue to try to raise awareness.
- We'll evaluate whether to keep the phones and whether to change the plans this summer.
- We could extend the checkout time from one month to three months, to be the same as the other, more popular program.
- I hope we'll get some survey results back going forward.



# References and Recommended Reading

Jordan-Makely, C., & Austin, J. (2021, September). OUTSIDE AND IN: How libraries are providing services for people impacted by incarceration. *Library Journal*, 146(9), 21+.

[https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A674712095/AONE?u=wash\\_main&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=acb7fab5](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A674712095/AONE?u=wash_main&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=acb7fab5)

Ringrose, K. (2020). Libraries & Reentry: The Importance of Public Spaces, Technologies, and Community to Formerly Incarcerated Patrons. *ALA Policy Perspectives* (7), 1–16.

[https://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/tools/Libraries%26Reentry\\_WEB\\_090620%20%282%29.pdf](https://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/tools/Libraries%26Reentry_WEB_090620%20%282%29.pdf)