

# Understanding the Second Chance Act

## **Sec. 211: Mentoring Grants to Nonprofit Organizations**

### **Background**

On April 9, 2008, President Bush signed the Second Chance Act ([P.L. 110-199](#)) into law. The bill received bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress in its passage and is supported by a broad spectrum of leaders representing states, law enforcement, corrections, courts, and local governments. This first-of-its-kind legislation will authorize various grants to government agencies and nonprofit groups to provide employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing, family programming, mentoring, victims support, and other services that can help reduce re-offending and violations of probation and parole.

This guide is intended to help nonprofit organizations prepare for the Second Chance mentoring grants should funding become available. The following information details the specific grant requirements contained in the law.

### **Section 211: Mentoring Grants to Nonprofit Organizations**

Section 211 of the Second Chance Act (42 U.S.C. § 17531) authorizes the Department of Justice to make grants to nonprofit organizations and Indian Tribes for the purpose of providing mentoring and other transitional services essential to reintegrating offenders into the community. The mentoring grants are authorized at \$15 million per year, though the appropriations process will determine the actual funding level of the program.

### **Who Can Apply?**

Nonprofit organizations and Indian Tribes may apply for grants under Sec. 211.

### **Allowable Uses**

The Department of Justice is authorized to award grants under Sec. 211 for the following uses:

- Mentoring adult and juvenile offenders during incarceration, through transition back to the community, and post-release;
- Transitional services to assist in the reintegration of offenders into the community; and
- Training regarding offender and victims issues.

## **Mandatory Requirements**

The Second Chance Act requires applicants to identify specific performance outcomes related to the long-term goal of stabilizing communities by reducing recidivism and reintegrating offenders into the community. Each grant recipient will be required to report on its progress toward achieving its strategic performance outcomes.

## **Priority Considerations**

The Second Chance Act directs the Department of Justice to give priority consideration to applications that:

- Include a plan to implement activities that have been demonstrated effective in facilitating the successful reentry of offenders; and
- Provide for an independent evaluation that includes, to the maximum extent feasible, random assignment of offenders to program delivery and control groups.

## **For More Help**

The [Reentry Policy Council](#) (RPC) is a project coordinated by the [Council of State Governments Justice Center](#), a national nonprofit organization that provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies – informed by available evidence – to increase public safety and strengthen communities. The Reentry Policy Council was established to assist state government officials grappling with the increasing number of people leaving prisons and jails to return to the communities they left behind. The comprehensive *Report of the Re-Entry Policy Council*, published in 2005, reflects the results of their work: policy statements and recommendations to promote the safe and successful return of individuals from prison or jail to the community. The Reentry Policy Council has a number of resources available to the field.

If you have not already done so, you may subscribe to the Council of State Governments Justice Center's RPC newsletter: <http://www.reentrypolicy.org/subscribe>. If and when the Second Chance Act is funded, the newsletter will provide detailed information about how to apply for funding.

For more information, please visit <http://justicecenter.csg.org> or email [Jessica Nickel](mailto:jnickel@csg.org) at [jnickel@csg.org](mailto:jnickel@csg.org).