“Centering system-impacted and formerly incarcerated people in criminal justice reform efforts is crucial for ensuring that reforms are rooted in reality, address the most pressing issues, and are genuinely transformative.

Their experiences and expertise are invaluable resources for creating a more just and equitable criminal legal system.”

— WILLIE EDWARDS, CREDIBLE MESSENGER SUPERVISOR
Our most important metrics are lower rates of recidivism and higher rates of successful reentry for people who were formerly incarcerated. But these statistics don’t happen in a vacuum. Here is a data snapshot of the many variables that have influenced our work and our success over the past 10 years.

**Our Membership experiences a three-year recidivism* rate of less than 10 percent compared to the statewide recidivism rate of 60 percent.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>In 2023</th>
<th>Since Inception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime ARC Members</td>
<td>4,954</td>
<td>50K+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who are incarcerated impacted through Hope and Redemption Team</td>
<td>2,269</td>
<td>6,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Support Group Sessions Completed</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>1,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents housed in ARC housing sites</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates from the Second Chance Apprenticeship Readiness Program</td>
<td>3,103</td>
<td>11K+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura Fire Fighter Training Program Participants</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>300+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical therapy sessions</td>
<td>396</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California bills passed and counting</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*ARC defines recidivism as a conviction of a new felony or misdemeanor committed within 3 years of release from custody or committed [date of offense] within three years of placement on supervision for a previous criminal conviction.
Since 2013, the Anti-Recidivism Coalition has been working to end mass incarceration in California and change public perception of incarceration in the United States. We’re transforming the criminal legal system by empowering people who are formerly or currently incarcerated, providing enhanced support networks, comprehensive reentry services, and opportunities to advocate for policy change. Our staff, the majority of whom are system-impacted, provide the engine for this transformation. They are the reason our model works—one inside program, one ride home, and one legislative reform at a time.

We’re honored to share with you some of the voices, statistics, and success stories that capture our work over the last ten years.
WHAT IS A CREDIBLE MESSAGERS?
A credible messenger is a mentor who is formerly incarcerated and is a trained facilitator who can connect and guide a young person from a similar background. ARC Members can relate, communicate with young people, and support them during incarceration because of their experiences inside the system. Our Credible Messengers understand the mindset, attitudes, and trauma incarcerated youth carry with them.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend,

I am deeply honored to address you on the occasion of the Anti-Recidivism Coalition’s tenth anniversary. As I reflect on how much we’ve grown and how far we’ve come, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to serve as the Executive Director of ARC.

My path, which has been directly system-impacted, has given me a unique perspective on the challenges and obstacles faced by individuals within the prison and reentry populations. The seeds of transformation were sown within the walls of the facility where I was detained. The collective resilience of people who were formerly incarcerated and returning citizens continues to fuel this change.

When we embarked on this journey a decade ago, there was no roadmap for successful rehabilitation and reentry programming. We had to forge our path, envisioning a world where individuals like me could find redemption and a new beginning through fair chances. ARC’s programs were born out of necessity and a shared desire for transformation.

Over the past ten years, we have achieved so much as a collective. ARC’s dedicated team members, 78 percent of whom share lived experiences of incarceration, have worked tirelessly to transform our criminal legal system. Even in the face of daunting challenges, we have expanded our programs and taken our policy work to the national level.

One accomplishment in particular fills me with immense pride: the expansion of the Hope & Redemption Team (HART). In 2017, I founded this initiative to provide hope, demonstrate that redemption is achievable, and prepare incarcerated individuals for successful reentry. Now, HART is set to have a presence in every California prison and to serve 50,000 people who are incarcerated annually. Its success is a testament to the enduring power of transformation.

Our vision for the future extends far beyond the organization’s current boundaries. ARC is working to share this transformative model widely, and we’ve been invited to help implement the credible messenger program in Puerto Rico, Florida, and other communities beyond California. We’re driven by the need to protect our children and build a future where the systems no longer fail them. Our commitment to the most vulnerable among us remains unwavering.

In closing, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to you, our partners, for joining us in this work within the reform movement. Your support throughout the last decade has been a beacon of hope, and your belief in our work is what keeps us moving forward. Together, we can continue to ensure that our returning citizens have the support and compassion they need and deserve.

With gratitude and determination,

Sam Lewis
Executive Director
LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

While ARC was founded in 2013, its roots can be traced back to 2003, when I first stepped into Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall.

At the time, I worked in the film industry, and a friend in the industry invited me to observe a writing workshop at Nidorf Hall through the Inside OUT Writers (IOW) program. I sat alongside incarcerated youth in the Compound, including some as young as 15 years old, who were facing adult prison sentences. One boy was facing more than 200 years in prison.

Through their writing, I learned of the life-altering decisions that led them to Nidorf Hall, but also of their childhoods, marked by trauma, violence, and neglect. That day changed the trajectory of my life’s work. Sitting with these young people, listening to their stories, and hearing what they had faced before incarceration, as well as their present and future barriers, galvanized my commitment to mentoring incarcerated youth. Since 2013, I’ve conducted regular writing classes in the facility.

Over the years, I witnessed many writing students leave juvenile halls and prisons across California only to return to incarceration. The gaps in community and support services that led these students into the system in the first place made the challenges of reentry insurmountable.

I founded the Anti-Recidivism Coalition to fill these gaps, bringing together formerly incarcerated young people with positive mentors who offer encouragement, guidance, and resources. What began as an annual camping trip has grown into a support and advocacy network of more than 2,500 Members and hundreds of volunteer mentors and allies committed to helping one another through reentry and advocating for a more just criminal legal system.

Now as 2023 comes to a close, we proudly reflect on our 10-year history and our collective role in the criminal legal reform movement. We thank you for reading about our work and invite you to reflect with us on the incredible accomplishments of the last decade. Together, we’ve changed laws and, as a result, the lives of many valuable community members who might otherwise not be living free.

ARC was born out of storytelling, and we know sharing stories has the power to build understanding and change minds. We look forward to expanding and continuing our remarkable story with you alongside us.

In solidarity,

Scott Budnick
Founder
Our Mission

The Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) works to end mass incarceration in California. To ensure our communities are safe, healthy, and whole, ARC empowers people who are formerly or currently incarcerated by providing support networks, comprehensive reentry services, and opportunities to advocate for policy change. Through our grassroots policy advocacy, we commit to transforming the criminal legal system, making it more just and equitable for all people.

What makes ARC unique is our 360-degree approach: We serve individuals from the time they enter the criminal legal system through the reentry process and provide day-to-day post-incarceration support. We combine rehabilitative programming inside prisons and jails with a post-release peer network and continuum of care to support individuals at every stage of their journey—from incarceration to release to freedom.

ARC’s staff is made up of 78 percent people who were formerly incarcerated who leverage their valuable knowledge and expertise as they walk alongside our Members throughout their journey home. Our results speak for themselves: Our Membership experiences a two-year recidivism rate of less than 10 percent compared to the statewide recidivism rate of 60 percent.
“I think the biggest thing that ARC has done is give formerly incarcerated folks a voice. That voice is the voice of change; it’s given us a platform to talk about change.”

— HARVEY KNIGHT, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES
STATEMENT OF NEED

>$182 BILLION per year is spent by the government and justice-involved families on the system of mass incarceration.

$13.6 BILLION per year is spent on local jails, with the majority of costs going to detaining people who have not been convicted.

57% of state government spending goes to the correctional system, with local governments making up 32%.

50% of the money spent on running the correctional system goes to paying staff, an influential lobby that sometimes prevents reform.

100:1 is the ratio of the government payroll for corrections employees compared to the private prison industry’s profits.
WHY WE DO THIS WORK

At ARC, we are committed to reassessing and transforming how the U.S. legal system is funded and managed. Our dedication is fueled by the stark realities of current correctional expenditures. Consider these facts:

- Approximately half of the financial resources allocated to run correctional facilities are absorbed by staffing costs. The influence of correctional staff lobbies is formidable; at times, this influence can impede the crucial reforms needed to address the inefficiencies and injustices within our system. Local jails alone account for an expenditure of around $13.6 billion, a significant portion of which is directed towards the detention of individuals not yet convicted.

- State governments allocate 57 percent of their spending to corrections, with local governments contributing nearly a third of this sum.

- The criminal legal system is overwhelmingly public. The government payroll for corrections employees is over 100 times higher than the private prison industry’s profits.

- The broader system of mass incarceration places a staggering $182 billion annual burden on the government and the families involved in the justice system.

These figures tell the story of a system in urgent need of reform. ARC is working tirelessly to redirect resources towards urgently needed restorative and rehabilitative methods, which will help reduce recidivism, support reintegration, and promote a more equitable justice system—all of which will reduce states’ reliance on incarceration, lower costs for taxpayers, and improve the quality of life and economic stability for people leaving prison.
WHERE WE WORK

Our work in California is driven, in part, by a deep understanding of the racial and economic injustices that persist in our state. These injustices reveal themselves in alarmingly disproportionate numbers of Black and Brown people currently living in detention facilities.

Here are just some of the alarming statistics we’re working to change through our advocacy, policy work, and 360 programming.

In the US, 56,000 people have been sentenced to life without parole, more than the rest of the world combined. The US imprisons 83 percent of the people sentenced to life without parole worldwide.

About 5,000 people are serving life without parole in California, the third largest number of any U.S. jurisdiction.

Youth in L.A.’s probation camps are 16.7 years old on average but are achieving at a 5th-grade level in math and reading. 21 percent were classified as special education students, in comparison to the national average of 13.7 percent.

58 percent of probation-involved youth reported they had received a prior diagnosis of substance use and dependency. Over one-third of probation-involved youth have been in an alcohol or drug placement in the past.

Black people make up 6 percent of California’s population but account for approximately 30 percent of the state’s prison population, 25 percent of the jail population, and 26 percent of the probation population.

The racial disparity in imprisonment nationally is 4.8:1, meaning that for every 1 white person imprisoned, there are 4.8 Black people incarcerated.

In California, the racial disparity ratio is 9.2:1.
ARC doesn’t wait for a release date to begin supporting people who are incarcerated. One of the many strategies that make us unique is offering programming at every stage: working with individuals from the time they enter the criminal legal system, throughout their sentence and release, and even after reentry.

In addition to supporting individuals through the entire incarceration experience, ARC programs also support them as whole people. This means we consider their identities, family situations, career goals, and sense of personal worth and agency. By employing a holistic approach, we help people who are incarcerated build the skills and strengths they identify as most necessary to achieve success upon their release.

Here’s a closer look at how we do it.
**INSIDE PROGRAMS**

Our Inside Programs focus on building the knowledge, skills, and confidence our community members need to reenter the outside world before they leave detention. ARC staff, Members, and volunteers regularly visit the California prison system to provide rehabilitative programming and host policy workshops that bring hope to thousands of people who are incarcerated. Whether it’s the Hope And Redemption Team (HART), the Peer Mentorship Program, or the Youth Offender Parole Workshops, our programming provides tools that support decision-making, self-advocacy, and community investment. These programs are essential in preparing our community members for future challenges. They’ve also helped many students on the inside find work and opportunities on the outside; some have even become essential ARC staff following their release.

**HART**
The Hope And Redemption Team (HART) is composed of staff members who were formerly incarcerated and who now lead rehabilitative programming and reentry support in every prison in California. Operating in 26 California State prisons, the team supports and strengthens rehabilitative and reentry programs, ultimately reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for returning citizens.

ARC staff liaise with the Community Resources Manager at each facility to schedule and recruit participants. ARC’s Life Coaches are trained in transformative mentoring, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and cognitive-based support groups such as Criminals and Gang Members Anonymous. ARC’s Life Coaches also provide reentry planning and support, including arranging a welcoming place for participants to land upon their release. On request, the Hope And Redemption Team is available to speak at trainings or participate in management meetings to advise on improving institutional culture.

**CREDIBLE MESSENGER MENTORING** Since 2015, ARC has provided mentoring, rehabilitation, and reentry services for incarcerated Transitional Aged Youth (TAY). Operating in four Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities, and both male and female county juvenile detention facilities, our Transformative Mentoring program employs Credible Messenger Mentoring, one of the most effective methods of intervention for justice-involved youth. All of our Life Coach mentors are people who were formerly incarcerated as well.

This checklist, developed by Credible Messenger Supervisor Oscar Bonilla, outlines the depth of support and care that Credible Messengers put into reentry planning.

- **Housing/Transitional Housing**: Stable housing ranks among the top three needs for youth upon reentry.
- **Documentation**: California ID, Social Security card, and driver’s license.
- **Understanding Triggers**: Identifying triggers and how to manage them is a critical skill for successful reentry.
- **Causative Factors**: Reflecting on what led up to their crimes can help people who were formerly incarcerated circumvent these factors going forward.
- **Victim Remorse Letter**: Encouraging people who were formerly incarcerated to make amends with the people affected by their crimes is one way we weave empathy into our skill-building approach.
- **Education & Career Paths**: Whether youth are finishing up high school or college, exploring educational goals is an important step in carving out a career path, achieving financial stability, and maintaining a sustainable livelihood. In addition to learning about career options, youth are taught how to structure their resumes and cover letters.
- **Money Management/ Budgeting**: Knowing how to manage money is as important as knowing how to earn money.
- **Family Reunification**: Youth incarceration can be a hindrance to maintaining family relationships. Even before they are incarcerated, they may not have great relationships with their families and need a support system. Reunification is a huge marker for success upon reentry.

Reentry into society is not one-size-fits-all

While people who are incarcerated may have some experiences in common, everyone’s circumstances are different. That’s why Credible Messengers and Life Coaches are trained to support individuals holistically. Responding to individual needs is not the status quo across jurisdictions, which is why ARC emphasizes the importance of bringing Credible Messengers and Life Coaches to the table.

In September of 2022, ARC received funding from Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis to hire the first two full-time Credible Messengers who are now assigned to Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall. In March 2023, with funding from the County of Los Angeles and the Department of Youth Development, ARC deployed eight Credible Messengers to Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall and Campus Kilpatrick.
WOMEN’S DEPARTMENT

Creating resilient communities is central to our vision for the Women’s Department. Since 2019 it has been our mission to provide gender-responsive services for more women, nonbinary individuals, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and families by addressing the unique reentry barriers faced by these groups. At our core, the department is committed to providing an extra layer of resources and support during the reintegration process.

EMPOWERING CHANGE FROM WITHIN At the Women’s Department, we recognize that transformation requires both emotional and logistical support. We empower women to embark on their unique journeys toward freedom, accountability, and self-discovery through programming rooted in our experiences as women who are formerly incarcerated. In particular, we share a deep understanding of the challenges incarcerated mothers face and the effects of incarcerating women on children, families, and communities. Our approach views women as whole people with multifaceted lives, experiences, and relationship networks.

'Til Your Mom Gets Home

“A friend, who is still incarcerated, mentioned that her son was struggling immensely with her absence and needed support. We asked an ARC Life Coach to reach out to this young man, providing a lifeline of understanding and assistance. He now has a wonderful mentor as support, sent to him by his loving mother, and 'Til Your Mom Gets Home was born! The reasons for establishing this program are to help children cope with maternal incarceration and to provide a support network and community while honoring the unique role women play in their family networks.”

—Norma Cumpian, ARC's Women’s Department Director

MEMBER SERVICES

ARC provides both reentry services and the resources returning citizens need to survive and thrive.

CLINICAL SERVICES Our clinical services include individual therapy for our Members as well as group sessions led by mental health professionals.

LIFE COACHING Life Coaches offer knowledge, support, and the benefit of their lived experience as Members navigate the challenges of transitioning back home. They connect Members to a range of services and resources, including legal support, career-readiness training, creative writing workshops, public benefits, and transportation. Staff can also connect Members to substance use disorder treatment programs if needed.

In 2023 alone...

- 939 Members attended ARC-supported enrichment classes like yoga, healthy relations, anger management, emotional intelligence, and financial literacy workshops.
- ARC hosted 114 all-Members support meetings.
- 322 Members attended monthly housing dinners.
HOW OUR PROGRAMS SUPPORT REENTRY

RIDE HOME

ARC’s Ride Home program helps ease the transition for individuals released from detention facilities. From the moment they walk free, people who were formerly incarcerated are met at the gate and provided free transportation and much more. The first few hours after leaving a detention facility can feel both exhilarating and terrifying. Depending on their circumstances or the length of their sentence, a returning citizen may find their support system has shrunk significantly or disappeared altogether. Many report feeling fearful about whether and how they’ll succeed in this new life phase. Connecting with drivers who understand this fear and uncertainty takes some of the anxiety out of being released and can help returning citizens feel less alone.

Our experienced ARC reentry counselors and drivers are people who were formerly incarcerated, themselves. They offer returning citizens an opportunity to spend time with a peer who’s been through a similar experience and a practical and realistic plan for reentry. Our mission is to counsel returning citizens on how to approach and overcome obstacles, share a first meal, buy fresh clothing and toiletries together, bring them to a safe home, and introduce them to a changed world. After initial release, we keep in touch for follow-up counseling and support in becoming ARC Members.

“The pathway that we’ve developed for folks makes it—I don’t want to say a lot easier—I think it makes it a community where people understand that there’s going to be people just like you and they’re going to walk you through the experience of transitioning back into the community.”

– CARLOS CERVANTES, RIDE HOME PROGRAM MANAGER

WORKFORCE & EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

The Workforce and Education Development programs focus on helping post-release Members secure jobs, build long-term careers, and achieve economic mobility. All Members complete a three-day ARC Career Readiness Workshop to equip them with soft skills and resources to help secure job placement and educational opportunities. The Workshop also supports Members enrolling in school, assisting with financial aid applications, class registration, and connections with on-campus groups for nontraditional students.

Students in our Workforce and Education Development programs also benefit from our partnerships with leading businesses. For some, these partnerships lead to internships and full-time employment. Participants in our 11-week Second Chance Apprenticeship Readiness Program learn the fundamentals of construction through our partners, the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades, which support us with job placements into union apprenticeships, and the Los Angeles Unified School District, which supports us in teaching the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum.

VENTURA FIRE FIGHTER TRAINING PROGRAM The Ventura Fire Fighter Training Program is an innovative, 18-month residential program in which participants develop rehabilitation life skills, job readiness, professional experience, receive firefighter training and certifications, and much more.
HOUSING

At ARC, we redefine possibilities through our innovative transitional housing programs for both adults and transitional-aged-youth in Los Angeles County. Strategically placed across Koreatown, Boyle Heights, and Atwater Village, our housing sites stand as beacons of hope.

WHAT MAKES ARC HOUSING UNIQUE? It’s more than just a roof over one’s head. We’re a lifeline for those returning from incarceration, providing on-site life skills programming, trauma counseling, education, and employment guidance. Our live-in mentors aim to create a supportive community by nurturing independence and wellness.

ARC currently operates three housing sites in Los Angeles County: Magnolia Youth Transitional Housing Program in Koreatown; Lorena Adult Transitional Housing Program in Boyle Heights; and the Hollywood CPR Dorm in Atwater Village.

STATE AND NATIONAL POLICY ADVOCACY

Since our founding in 2013, ARC has supported the passage of 35 pieces of California State legislation (see page 6), not including legislation we secured on the local level. From day one, we’ve known the power and influence held within our Members’ stories. Our success in changing the minds and hearts of policymakers and society at large is rooted in bringing system-impacted people to the table to tell their histories and journeys.

Our policy team, spearheaded by people who were formerly incarcerated, works with state and national legislators and politicians to advance real change and bring hope to hundreds of thousands of people involved in or affected by the criminal legal system.

“The Advocacy Department changes laws, hearts, and minds. We do so by creating leadership capacity among people who are directly impacted by the carceral system. It is so meaningful, as an advocacy department, to be contextualized by ARC’s larger presence and mission. We work with the direct services departments and our Membership to have a deep understanding of complex issues as they are shifting in real time. We’re also able to see the immediate impact of our work.”

— CELINA CHAPIN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY
At the peak of our prison population in 2006, California incarcerated *165,000* people in state prisons.

California’s prison population reached its *lowest level in thirty years*. In February 2021, CDCR’s population was 94,306, the lowest population since 1989, and 46 percent of the population at CDCR’s peak of *173,643* in October 2006.

As of January 2023, CDCR was responsible for incarcerating about *95,600* people—91,300 men, 3,900 women, and 400 nonbinary people.
ON THE HORIZON

As we look ahead to the next ten years, we remain committed to building on three core initiatives:

PREVENTION WORK

To truly effect change in our criminal legal system, we need to stop overcriminalization and the flow of incarceration. In our next phase, ARC is emphasizing preventive care so we can change the circumstances that push individuals, especially our youth, into the correctional system. The goal is to enhance our team’s ability to provide support and guidance during transitional periods, which has a profound impact on keeping individuals from continuing down a path that is ultimately harmful—for themselves, their families, and their communities.

ENHANCED HOUSING & ARC HUB

Providing housing is a major factor in helping people who were formerly incarcerated successfully reenter society. Our goal is to acquire more housing facilities across the state of California and build an ARC Hub for Members to have a safe place to thrive and receive the support they need.

REPLICATION IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS

ARC’s success in California can and should be replicated nationwide. The goal is to reach into other jurisdictions and provide a roadmap for other organizations and states to follow. This includes empowering youth to spearhead and participate in legislative work and advocacy programs.

After a decade, our resolve and commitment is stronger than ever. We are steadily improving our programs and services to maintain the momentum toward making our communities safer, healthier, and more whole.

- Growing educational programs
- Expanding services to Members in and out of prison
- Increasing transitional housing
- Adding more jobs to build long-lasting careers
- Creating safer communities
- Changing the narrative around mass incarceration
- Driving legislative changes
PROGRAM EXPENDITURES FY 22-23
$12.3 MILLION

OVERALL EXPENDITURES FY 22-23
$15.67 MILLION

78.5% OF OUR FUNDS GO TOWARDS OUR PROGRAMS
IN THE NEWS

We believe everyone deserves second chances, and we know that making our current criminal legal system more equitable requires changing hearts and minds. To do this, we invite people to share in our stories of hope, redemption, and healing. Here are some of the outlets that have helped amplify our community’s experiences and ideas over the years.

The Atlantic  Rolling Stone
Inside Philanthropy  NFL.com
NBA.com  Los Angeles Times
NFL  The New York Times
Forbes  witnessLA
THANK YOU

Thank you for being so supportive in building ARC over the past decade into the community we have today. This report is a vibrant reflection of success, and still, when we look forward, we know our work is needed to make positive change.

STAY CONNECTED

Subscribe to the ARC newsletter for information, updates, and opportunities to take action. Stay connected and inspired.

We are proud of everything we have accomplished with you by our side, and we encourage you to donate if you feel moved to do so.

ANTIRECIDIVISM.ORG/DONATE

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