

Myths About Incarceration and Offenders

Myth: *You are wasting your time because nothing helps these people.*

Fact: Not true. An entire body of research called **What Works Research** clearly shows there are programs that can help reduce the likelihood that an offender will return to prison after released. The programs provided by Opening Doors[®] closely follow these successful practices and methodologies.

Myth: *Someone else is addressing these needs.*

Fact: The program services offered by Opening Doors to offenders and their families are quite unique. While some things can be provided by institutions, much of the support and opportunities required to help offenders return to their families can only be provided by volunteers and others from the faith community. However, even volunteer organizations need resources to provide their unique services.

Myth: *Criminals deserve what they get.*

Fact: One of the most common responses of people when they first become involved with the offender population is the shock that they seem so “normal.” While they have made poor choices and committed crimes, they are people. Many are moms and dads...individuals who, for the most part, can grow and change with the right assistance. However, even if you firmly believe adult offenders are not worthy of assistance, what about their children? Without the necessary intervention, they are “sentenced” to “serve time” right alongside their parent thus becoming the “invisible victims.”

Myth: *I don't need to become involved because when criminals are sent to prison the community is safe.*

Fact: 95% of offenders are released after serving time for the crime they've committed. The average offender in Ohio serves only 2.73 years, and 60% of them are released within one year. They often return to the same communities from which they were sentenced and face the same pressures and circumstances that led them to prison in the first place. Without intervention, the families are more fractured than before incarceration, and the children have already started to make choices that could start them on the path toward prison as well.

Myth: *Once a criminal always a criminal.*

Fact: Not true. An increasing number of studies provide ample evidence of what can be done to help individuals successfully transition from prison to the community. We now know “what” to do - there simply aren't enough resources to fully implement these practices for everyone who needs the help. Won't you consider becoming part of the solution?



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Myth: *The State has the responsibility of caring for the children left behind when mom or dad becomes incarcerated.*

Fact: Not true. One of the first lessons learned when becoming involved with the incarcerated is that “governments can’t love, only people can.” The State “may” be able to provide certain types of assistance, but what about the love these kids need to grow into healthy responsible adults? If we don’t provide it, who will?

Myth: *Most criminals are African-American.*

Fact: Not true. On average, Ohio’s incarcerated offenders are:

- 51% white
- 48% black
- 1% other races

Myth: *Most of the people in prison are really bad people like murderers or rapists.*

Fact: Not true. In 2005, less than 10% of offenders were convicted of a serious violent crime. Less than 1% of all violent crime arrests for females and less than 2% of male violent crime arrests were for murder.

- 31.3% of males and 24% of females were incarcerated for committing a drug offense
- 20.5% of females were incarcerated for miscellaneous property offenses