

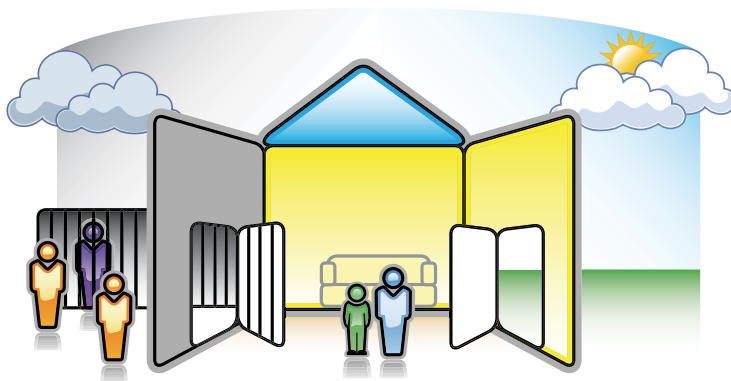
## Opening Doors® for the Offender

**Opening Doors for the Offender works with men, women, and youth who are incarcerated in an Ohio prison. We provide three-day, highly interactive programs that focus on:**

- Encouraging personal growth
- Building community and trust
- Learning conflict resolution skills
- Learning to communicate effectively
- Understanding the Law of Use and the value of choices

So often inmates struggle with self-worth, depression, and feelings of inadequacy. Many of them lack the confidence that they can change, or that life can ever be different.

**The Opening Doors curriculum is creative and interactive to most effectively help inmates embrace the idea that he or she really can change.** During the last six years more than 1,500 offenders have completed the program, and their evaluations are consistently positive. In fact, many inmates comment that it is the best program they have ever attended.



Our philosophy is simple: *"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."* That's why we only allow volunteers to facilitate the programs in the prisons. The volunteer heart filled with God's love best demonstrates the caring attitude that makes a profound difference in the life of another. When the inmates discover that the facilitators are there for one reason – to help them learn to make better choices in their lives – they are deeply touched and motivated to reach for change they never thought possible.

*Even though Opening Doors of Ohio is a faith-based organization, program participation is voluntary and open to all offenders without regard to faith beliefs or practices.*

## Opening Doors® for the Offender

### **What is the vision of**

#### **Opening Doors?**

The vision of Opening Doors is to help those impacted by incarceration to build healthier relationships resulting in strengthened families, steady post-release employment, reduced recidivism and restored communities. We do this by creating effective partnerships with individuals, the faith community, the prisons, and the corporate community.

### **What is the mission of**

#### **Opening Doors?**

Opening Doors of Ohio is a Christ-centered ministry that believes dramatic life transformation occurs when a healthy, loving community is experienced. Poor skills, social isolation and the absence of caring role models have often prevented those impacted by incarceration from developing healthy supportive relationships. When faith-based volunteers work together with prisons, families and corporate communities, lives are transformed, families are strengthened, and communities are restored.

### **What does Opening Doors seek to accomplish?**

Opening Doors seeks to help inmates improve their skills at resolving conflict and building healthy relationships. We do this by focusing on community building, affirmation, trust, listening skills, the value of personal choices, a positive thought life, and understanding the “law of use” – new knowledge remains theory unless it is put into practice.

### **What makes Opening Doors different from other inmate programs?**

The facilitated learning (also known as “experiential learning”) format we use in our program makes it very different from most inmate programs. Opening Doors does not use lecture, workbook or video. Our entire three-day agenda is designed to maximize participant involvement through a variety of exercises and activities. Some exercises are serious, some are humorous, but each has a specific purpose. After each completed exercise facilitators ask questions to discuss the concepts or skills that can be learned from the activity. Facilitators then “connect” the learning from each separate activity throughout the three days in such a way as to build information and skills throughout the program.

### **Why is this teaching model used?**

Research clearly shows that inmates more readily develop new skills when the teaching technique matches their learning style. Experiential learning is interactive and maximizes the investment the inmate makes in his or her own learning. Moreover, learning that takes place at a “heart” level is more likely to improve behavior than principles that are taught in a traditional classroom setting that targets “head” knowledge alone.

### **Who facilitates an Opening Doors program?**

An Opening Doors program is facilitated by a team of trained facilitators who volunteer their time. On average, one Opening Doors program depends on 60-90 volunteer hours.

### **If Opening Doors is facilitated by faith-based volunteers, does that make it a religious program?**

No. People in the faith community are most likely to have the desire to volunteer their time. However, facilitators are prohibited (by written contract with Opening Doors of Ohio, Inc.) from engaging in any conduct that attempts to “convert” inmate participants to their own faith beliefs.

### **Who pays for these services?**

Opening Doors of Ohio, Inc. is supported by financial contributions from individuals, private foundations, and some grants so that these programs can be offered to the prisons at no cost.