

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES



New York
Public
Library

The New York Public Library's Correctional Services team provides books and library programming to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated New Yorkers and their families. Through these activities, New York Public Library fills critical gaps in New York's criminal justice system by helping individuals develop a love for reading and the motivation to pursue knowledge.

New York City Jails

During six visits per week, Correctional Services (CS) operates five satellite libraries for people incarcerated in New York City Department of Corrections (DOC) jails. Each month, 800 to 1,200 men and women take advantage of circulating library services. Additionally, the CS team maintains small reading collections for special DOC housing areas. The book collections at DOC sites are comprised entirely of donated material from branch library discards and generous donors.

CS serves many special groups including men and women receiving mental health treatment, women with babies in the Rikers nursery program, teens, people in solitary confinement, older adults and people housed in the transgender housing unit.

"MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE MOBILE LIBRARY HAS BEEN GREAT. I DON'T THINK I EVER READ A WHOLE BOOK BEFORE I STARTED GOING TO THE MOBILE LIBRARY. NOW I CAN SAY I'VE READ OVER 100."
—READER AT RIKERS ISLAND

"THE MOBILE LIBRARY HAS GIVEN ME A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE AND JOURNEY INTO WORLDS THAT EXIST BEYOND OUR NATURAL KNOWING. THE LIBRARY STAFF THAT COME HERE HAVE BEEN A BIG INSPIRATION FOR ME AND I CAN BELIEVE WITHOUT A DOUBT, COUNTLESS OTHERS WHO LOVE TO READ AS I DO."
— JUAN, READER AT RIKERS ISLAND

State Prisons

New York Public Library (NYPL) provides library orientation and library card registration for men at Lincoln State Correctional Facility. Orientations provide information on services throughout the NYPL system including computer classes and literacy programs, an introduction to the research collections and offerings unique to NYPL. CS participates in resource fairs at seven state prisons. On average, CS provides services to over 800 people in state prisons annually.

Connections 2016

Each year, CS publishes and prints 13,000 copies of *Connections*, NYC's most exhaustive directory of resources for formerly incarcerated people and social service providers. CS is celebrating the publication of its 21st edition, with added chapters covering Youth, Immigrant and Veteran resources. Over 500 organizations are listed covering employment, housing, education, health, legal services, and much more. Explore the PDF of *Connections 2016* and a Spanish translation of *Connections 2015*, both available at nypl.org/corrections.

Book Discussion Groups

NYPL facilitates weekly book discussion groups where participants read and discuss a range of literature and non-fiction. The program is in its fourth year at federal prison Metropolitan Detention Center, and in its first year at Rikers Island where CS serves over 100 men. The program encourages positive, intellectual conversation and reduces idle time, thereby significantly decreasing violent incidents among our participants.

Reference Letters from Prisons

Every month, CS receives over 60 letters from incarcerated people requesting reference information on a wide variety of topics. In collaboration with Pratt Institute, library science graduate students answer the reference requests with care and expertise. Students hone their reference skills and learn about special populations within the public library.

Teen Programming

NYPL young adult specialists provide literacy workshops to teens incarcerated at juvenile facilities in New York City. In fall of 2014, CS created a depository library collection at East River Academy, a high school site for approximately 90 boys on Rikers Island. Started in Fall 2015, NYPL brings monthly poetry performances and workshops to young ladies ages 16-21 on Rikers Island.

“JAIL IS HARD; THE TIME SPENT OUT OF OUR NORMAL LIVES WILL NEVER BE RECAPTURED. IT WOULD BE EASY TO BECOME MORE VOLATILE OR COMBATIVE. IT WOULD BE EASY TO TURN OFF, SLEEP AROUND THE CLOCK, AND DROWN IN DEPRESSION. BY BRINGING BOOKS INTO JAIL, IT IS LIKE BRINGING CHRISTMAS EVERY TWO WEEKS AND LOANING US THE TOOLS TO TRAVEL EVERY DAY— IF ONLY IN OUR MINDS’ EYE.”
-KEIRA, READER AT RIKERS ISLAND

Family Literacy

NYPL’s Daddy & Me program for incarcerated parents operates at city and federal jails, and several community organizations. Parents attend early literacy workshops facilitated by NYPL staff and create an audio recording of a storybook for their children. The program culminates with a family day where the recording and book are presented to each child. Over 200 people participate in the program each year.

Reentry Work

NYPL is an official member of the New York Reentry Education Network (NYREN). The CS team works with NYREN members on resource sharing tools, policy initiatives, and forums connecting reentry service providers throughout New York.

The CS team provides workshops on the benefits of the public library for the staff and participants at several NYC organizations such as College and Community Fellowship, Bronx Defenders, Women’s Prison Association and more. Correspondingly, many reentry organizations have contributed to trainings for NYPL staff. CS delivers regular trainings on how to better serve formerly incarcerated patrons at branches across NYPL.

“THE LIBRARY SAVED ME IN MANY WAYS. MOST IMPORTANTLY IT HAS KEPT ME OCCUPIED READING INTERESTING BOOKS AND KEEPING ME 100% STRESS FREE.”
-READER AT RIKERS ISLAND