Technology-based solutions for enhancing corrections and reentry: Recommendations for technology vendors

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This brief summarizes some of the key challenges to reentry that emerging technology could help alleviate, current strategies to implement technology to address such challenges, and recommendations for improving the use of technology-based tools. It is intended to be used by technology vendors who are developing web- and application-based tools to facilitate reentry and is a companion piece to an earlier brief targeted toward correctional agencies considering the use of such technology.[1]

Introduction

A core responsibility of correctional agencies is supporting individuals who are transitioning from incarceration back to the community. The process of reentering society is complex, full of challenges, and difficult for even the most motivated individuals to navigate successfully. With recent estimates indicating that as many as 448,400 individuals are released from prison annually (Carson & Kluckow, 2023) and that approximately 44% of those individuals are rearrested during their first year back in the community (Alper et al., 2018), there is a widespread need to develop and implement tools to foster their success upon release. Ideally, such tools and strategies will alleviate challenges for correctional agencies and returning citizens while also being cost-effective and ensuring public safety.

Innovative technology-based tools have emerged to help facilitate reentry from an incarceration, and although the research on the impact of these tools remains limited, preliminary findings suggest they may offer some advantages, such as reduced reconviction rates (Duwe & McNeeley, 2021) and improved interactions with family (Palmer et al., 2020). This brief summarizes some of the key challenges technology could help alleviate,

> The process of reentering society after an incarceration is complex, full of challenges, and difficult for even the most motivated individuals to navigate successfully. There is a widespread need to develop and implement tools to foster returning citizens' success upon release.

1 Scaggs, S. J. A., Nyce, M. R., Lindquist, C. H., and Cortina, H. G. (2023). *Recommendations for Correctional Agencies' Use of Web- and Application-Based Tools to Facilitate Reentry Planning: Lessons From the Field*. RTI International. https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/recommendations-correctional-agencies-use-web-and-application-based-tools

THE REENTRY PLANNING STUDY
RTI INTERNATIONAL

current strategies to implement technology to address such challenges, and recommendations for improving the use of technology-based tools. The content presented in this brief is based on insights from practitioners and justice-involved individuals who had access to a web-based reentry planning tool, Pokket (www.acivilate.com), in prisons operated by the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction. Their experiences and perspectives may be informative for companies aiming to develop or refine reentry-focused web-based tools, as well as for other stakeholders considering the adoption of similar tools.

Challenges in Reentry

Success in reentry requires the active engagement, coordination, and collaboration of multiple correctional agencies and the clients they serve over an extended period (Hunter et al., 2016). Individuals can leave prison after years of incarceration, feeling disconnected and left behind, without any assurance that their basic needs will be met. Agencies have opportunities to make the transition from prison to the community smoother for their clients, but they are often constrained by systemic challenges and state policies (Visher & Travis, 2003). Improving reentry outcomes requires acknowledging and effectively addressing these issues.

Systemic challenges

Structural issues within the criminal legal system and broader society often perpetuate the difficulties faced by returning citizens. These barriers are not merely individual challenges but may coincide with deeper systemic problems, such as discriminatory policies and institutional biases (Prison Policy Initiative, 2024), which collectively make reentry more difficult. Individuals reentering society may have inadequate support networks and require a range of services, from mental health and substance use disorder treatment to educational and vocational training (Anderson et al., 2018). The sheer number of individuals, coupled with the variety of their needs, places immense pressure on a system that is already stretched thin. Limited access to specialized resources and treatment programs means that many clients do not receive the targeted support they need to successfully reintegrate.

Systemic challenges can also influence the experiences of individuals returning to the community in nearly all aspects of reentry. For example, most clients will require housing and employment, and because employment can affect housing with respect to income requirements and other indicators of financial stability, the issues are interrelated (Cunha et al., 2023; Kirk, 2018). Unfortunately, both needs are difficult to fulfill while incarcerated, and more challenges can begin to accumulate upon reentry. Clients may be subject to background checks that could limit where they can live and work. Furthermore, many clients enter an employment climate that is different from the one they knew before incarceration (Prison Policy Initiative, 2022). Technology has changed the

Improving reentry outcomes requires acknowledging and effectively addressing systemic challenges faced by returning citizens, as well as the correctional agencies and service providers who support them.

workforce and little time, resources, and opportunities to adjust to these changes are available before a client enters the job market. All of these systemic challenges can become significant obstacles for clients, and they represent only a small portion of the competing priorities that clients must manage simultaneously.

Agency-level challenges

Although practitioners nationwide are familiar with the larger systemwide issues that affect the reentry process, many agencies that aim to support clients during reentry encounter a myriad of their own obstacles in achieving their goals. Agencies must navigate evolving policies and regulations in criminal justice reform; manage public expectations regarding reintegration success; and collaborate with a variety of stakeholders, including community organizations, employers, and health care providers (Zhang et al., 2019). Communication channels between these service providers and justice agencies are often weak, making it exceedingly difficult to streamline the sharing of key information related to a client's goals, reentry plans, and progress. Even when agency operating norms are strategic and well managed, staffing shortages are common (Ballin et al., 2021) and challenge the provision of adequate support to individuals transitioning back into society. Correctional agencies and others providing support and services to clients also frequently lag behind in adopting modern technologies, which hinders the implementation of innovations that could improve efficiency and safety (Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2022). All these factors can complicate agency efforts to create effective reentry strategies that help formerly incarcerated individuals successfully reintegrate into their communities and reduce recidivism rates.

Technology-Based Solutions in Corrections

Correctional agencies have already integrated some forms of technology to address a variety of challenges. For example, although maintaining relationships with loved ones is important for individuals during periods of incarceration and in planning for reentry, visitation can present a number of issues for agencies and the individuals involved. It can create opportunities for the spread of illnesses, such as COVID-19, and for contraband to enter facilities (Novisky et al., 2023). Additionally, people are frequently incarcerated in places that are not near family or friends, making in-person visits difficult. Even if loved ones are able to visit, the environment can be unwelcoming and the experience stressful (Peterson et al., 2017). Remote video visits offer a strategy to alleviate these challenges while also allowing incarcerated individuals to maintain connections in the community, which is an important component of reentry. Video visitation shows promise in reducing the rate of reconvictions (Duwe & McNeeley, 2021), as it may help maintain social ties and offer convenience for visitors (Tartaro & Levy, 2017).

Advances in technology can be useful in alleviating common challenges in reentry for clients and practitioners. However, the utility of technology-based tools depends on the resources, buy-in, and interest that various users have in engaging with the tools and the implementation strategy employed by the jurisdiction.

While they are still in prison, clients can also use technology to learn or practice using life skills they will need after release. For example, multifunctional kiosks with self-service software were implemented in 13 prisons to provide opportunities for individuals to apply to education programs or employment opportunities, make health care appointments, check financial balances, book visits with loved ones, and join rehabilitation programs. A longitudinal study tracked these prisons over time to monitor the effects, comparing those prisons with kiosks to those without (McDougall et al., 2017). After implementation, there was significantly less reoffending among people in the prisons that had the kiosk technology than among people in those that did not. Specifically, the study found a 5.36% reduction in reconvictions within the first year after release for people released from prisons with the technology, compared to a 0.78% reduction in people released from comparison prisons without the technology. This finding suggests that access to the self-service technology had a modest positive impact on reoffending rates. Furthermore, there was a significant reduction in disciplinary actions within the prisons with the technology compared to in the prisons without it. In addition, 93% of incarcerated respondents reported the technology was "easy" or "very easy" to use despite little training. Most respondents felt that the kiosks gave them "more" or "much more" control over their lives in prison. The opportunity to have some control over basic tasks using technology shows ways that digital access in prison can improve a variety of outcomes such as reducing disciplinary offenses while in prison and new convictions after release.

Other forms of technology such as tablets, laptops, and cell phones have become available to some populations of incarcerated people to meet various needs. For example, tablets are available to individuals in prisons throughout the state of Ohio, and a self-administered cognitive-behavioral therapy intervention for substance use was made available through the tablets during periods of lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic (Elison-Davies et al., 2022). Individuals who completed more components of the substance use program had significant reductions in substance dependence, depression/anxiety, and biopsychosocial impairment, and increases in their quality-of-life scores, after the digital cognitive-behavioral therapy program. Digital technology has also been introduced in some prisons in England and Wales with the goals of giving people in prison the opportunity to build information technology skills, be autonomous, and improve relationships with family members, as well as to improve interactions between prison staff and clients (Palmer et al., 2020). To examine the effectiveness of the technology, researchers asked clients and staff to complete surveys and qualitative interviews. The surveys indicated that both staff and clients believed the in-cell telephones, self-service kiosks, and laptops were an improvement compared to

Access to technology in prison can allow people who are preparing for reentry to build information technology skills and have at least some autonomy over completing basic tasks. This can improve their sense of control and positively affect behavior while in custody and after release.

shared telephones outside of the cells and traditional paper-and-pencil administration of educational and other materials. People in prison reported greater ability to speak with family and improved psychological well-being, and findings showed reductions in prison violence (Palmer et al., 2020).

While advances in technology can be useful in alleviating common challenges in reentry for clients and practitioners, the utility of technology-based tools depends on the resources, buy-in, and interest that various users have in engaging with them and on the implementation strategy employed by the jurisdiction. While recommendations for **implementing** technology-based tools in corrections have been shared in previous publications (see, e.g., Scaggs et al., 2023; Tolbert et al., 2015), this brief shares insights for the **development** of such tools based on insights from practitioners and clients who had access to a web-based reentry application as part of a research study.

The Pokket Study

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) funded an evaluation of the implementation of a web-based reentry application, Pokket, in North Carolina. Developed a decade ago by Acivilate, Pokket is designed to support successful reentry by reducing existing challenges related to setting goals, planning, tracking progress, and communicating and sharing information across stakeholders. Accessed via any internet-enabled device such as a smartphone or tablet, Pokket is intended to be available to individuals before and after release from incarceration, and it includes accounts for both clients and the practitioners who support them. Case managers or other designated staff receive training in the application and are responsible for establishing an account for clients to access before their release from prison. Initially, staff are expected to provide a significant amount of support to ensure that the clients can use the application's features to meet their needs. Over time, however, the use of the tool is expected to become increasingly client-driven, empowering clients to advocate for themselves and feel a sense of self-sufficiency and ownership over their reentry process.

Clients transitioning back to the community may continue using the application on their own internet-enabled devices to connect and share information with community supervision officers and other relevant service providers. When fully implemented throughout a state or other jurisdiction, Pokket can include a directory of local services or programs that may meet the client's service needs, such as housing. It also includes a secure messaging system that can facilitate communication between the client and the supervision officers and service providers with whom they are working (on a joint message initiated by the client). Such messaging not only ensures that all providers receive the exact same information but can also facilitate more timely communication, as opposed to waiting to discuss more urgent needs at regular meetings that can be weeks or months apart. To promote compliance with meeting

The Pokket web-based reentry planning tool is designed to support successful reentry by reducing existing challenges related to setting goals, planning, tracking progress, and communicating with and sharing information across stakeholders.

requirements and other important obligations, a calendar with a reminder function is also included in the tool, as well as a check-in feature. File storage and sharing, as well as a dashboard to monitor progress toward explicitly defined reentry goals (developed by the client or service provider), are also included in the application's features, which, with the client's permission, can be useful in sharing information as clients transition between agencies or individual practitioners.

In the NIJ-funded study of Pokket in North Carolina, a subset of people who were in a Reentry Strategic Transition Engagement Plan (R-STEP) program in six prisons had access to Pokket from late 2020 through 2023. These individuals and the facility-based staff who worked with them (most of whom had participated in a training on Pokket) were interviewed for the study about their Pokket use and satisfaction with the tool. Because use was limited among these individuals because of challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, correctional staff shortages, and cumbersome procedures for accessing the tablets on which Pokket was used, reentering people from the same R-STEP program who did **not** have access to Pokket were also interviewed, along with a broader spectrum of facility-based staff (including not only case managers and educational staff but also correctional officers and reentry probation officers) and community-based service providers. In these interviews, the research team shared information about the Pokket tool and features with each respondent, using handouts that displayed the various features, and discussed the respondent's perceptions of the application and factors that would influence the extent to which they would use the application (and other similar reentry planning tools) and the specific features. The recommendations in the following section are based on insights gleaned from all sets of interviews conducted for the research study.

 The recommendations presented in this brief are based on interviews conducted with reentering people from several North Carolina adult prisons and with a broad spectrum of facility-based staff and community-based service providers who support them in their reentry planning.

Recommendations

On the basis of feedback from practitioners and clients who had an opportunity to use or learn about the Pokket application through this study, we derived the following seven recommendations for those who are interested in creating technological reentry resources for use in the criminal legal system.

Design technology-based tools and resources to be simple and easy to navigate. **1**

Provide thorough training for staff and clients. **2**

Prioritize increasing efficiency in routine tasks. **3**

Promote interagency communication and information sharing. **4**

Ensure that technology-based tools for correctional settings are flexible and adaptive to meet the diverse needs of various types of corrections agencies. **5**

Create tools with connection in mind. **6**

Ensure responsiveness to privacy and specialized needs of clients as end users. **7**

Design technology-based tools and resources to be simple and easy to navigate.

1

In line with prior research (Reisdorf & Rikard, 2018), individuals preparing for reentry in our study reported significant concerns about their ability to use new technologies. In general, people who are incarcerated may experience a digital divide because they never had the opportunity to use modern technology before incarceration or because access to such technology was unavailable to them during confinement (Smith, 2020). Incorporating user-friendly digital technologies into correctional or reentry programming can plausibly facilitate a smoother transition back into society and enhance users' quality of life after incarceration. In recent years, reentry services such as job seeking, finding housing, pursuing employment opportunities, getting legal assistance, and accessing health services, as well as maintaining relationships with family and friends, have become heavily reliant on technology (Reisdorf & Decook, 2022; Reisdorf et al., 2022). This shift toward digitization has significantly affected the reintegration process (Fernandes & Machado, 2022) and technology plays a valuable role in promoting incarcerated individuals' social skills, building their self-esteem, and supporting their transition back into society (Rantanen et al., 2022; Zivanai & Mahlangu, 2022). Virtual interactions can help individuals engage in communication, develop relationships, and gain confidence, which is crucial for their reintegration into society. To fully gain these potential benefits, interview respondents indicated that technology-based tools designed for returning citizens should be simple to use to account for the variation in skills, making them more broadly accessible.

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Provide thorough training for staff and clients.

2

The full benefits of innovations in technology can be acquired only if people understand how and when to use technology. Clients in this study expressed an interest in receiving formal education or training on broad-based types of technology and reported that a primary means of learning to use technology in prison had been through informal interactions with other people who were incarcerated. Gaining these skills is important, as a lack of digital literacy can impede someone's ability to successfully navigate reentry and adjust to a society where digital skills are increasingly crucial.

Similarly, the staff who were interviewed for this study had varying levels of proficiency with technology and training specific to the Pokket application. Those who participated in training before implementing the tool found it helpful, whereas those who did not take the training reported that their lack of familiarity with the Pokket application hindered

Training on technology should include up-front and ongoing formal training to maximize the acquisition of technology skills.

their capacity to integrate it into their work or respond to clients' requests for help in using its tools and resources. However, even the staff who participated in the training shared that having supplemental resources that were easy to access and understand (e.g., brief, focused YouTube videos) would better equip them to gain fluency in the application over time.[2]

The sentiments shared in the client and staff interviews align with previous research recommending that training be ongoing and that consumers of the technology understand the theories behind the promotion of the application (Link & Reece, 2021; Wisdom et al., 2014). Furthermore, group training might be more effective than individual training with regard to complicated technology (Greenhalgh et al., 2004). This approach may be especially true for clients in a correctional setting, who reported regularly working together to ensure that users understood how to use the technology.

Prioritize increasing efficiency in routine tasks. 3

Technology should be designed to increase efficiency in routine tasks. A theme that emerged in interviews with staff was an initial resistance to implementing new technologies, largely due to competing demands on their time, which can be amplified by staffing shortages in correctional institutions. Even though staff may initially experience feeling overwhelmed by integrating something new, modern technologies in correctional institutions can greatly enhance operations and offer significant benefits (Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2022). Technology can free staff from monotonous tasks like completing paperwork and submitting forms, allowing them to focus on more meaningful work, such as rehabilitation and direct client contact. Viglione (2019), for example, observed that parole officers spent only 6% of their time on case planning with people on supervision and only 7% of their time on discussing treatment or services. The majority of interactions, about 80%, were focused on procedural tasks, mainly paperwork completion and data entry. A shift toward reentry-based technologies may enable corrections staff to enhance their core functions and improve overall outcomes. Staff who participated in the interviews for the current study were open to this possibility and offered a specific recommendation to integrate new technologies with other existing systems that are currently in use and strategically eliminate redundancies, such as having to enter the same information repeatedly across multiple systems. For example, staff in many correctional agencies are already required to enter client information into risk-needs assessment databases or case management/planning software. Staff respondents for this study reported that entering

To be useful to staff, reentry planning technology should be designed to increase efficiency in routine tasks through features such as integration to existing data systems, auto-population, and bulk tasks.

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2 The Pokket tool does include such videos for staff who log into their accounts and know where to locate them.

data into the Pokket tool as well as the state correctional agency database was duplicative and that learning the new Pokket technology added to their existing workload.

The capacity to link data systems and auto-populate some information was noted as a feature of reentry planning technology that would be a major asset. Respondents also suggested limiting the inclusion of content that needs to be written out and designing systems to have more check boxes or drop-down menus as optimal strategies for reducing time spent on documentation. In addition, staff respondents offered suggestions for reducing redundancy in their work by creating automated reminders for important events and generating referrals for services. Reminders for individuals on supervision can significantly enhance compliance and reduce recidivism (Zottola et al., 2022). These reminders can be sent via text messages, emails, or telephone calls, ensuring that individuals do not miss important appointments, court dates, or mandatory check-ins. The benefits are substantial: reminders help maintain structure and accountability, reduce the likelihood of technical violations due to forgetfulness, and ease the administrative burden on supervision officers (Andersson et al., 2020). Automated reminders can also support positive behavior reinforcement, aiding individuals in successfully completing their supervision terms. Ultimately, these features will save staff time and promote success in reentry for returning citizens.

Promote interagency communication and information sharing. 4

Interagency communication and information sharing are crucial in reentry (Link & Reece, 2021; Visher et al., 2016). Returning citizens may begin the reentry process during confinement, but as they transition back to the community, they will often be required to report to community supervision officers. Upon release, many individuals will also reside in halfway houses, receive other services through one or more community-based providers, or both (Zhang et al., 2019). Two key takeaways emerged in the interviews conducted as part of this study related to the need to promote interagency communication and information sharing. First, both staff and clients emphasized that having a centralized electronic repository for finding service providers would be a major asset, particularly if it can be searched for a specific geographic area of interest (as opposed to a statewide directory). This tool would allow both staff and clients to identify providers who could assist in a client's reentry, particularly as needs change over time. Staff felt that it would reduce the time they need to spend researching options for clients in need and that clients would feel empowered by this search feature because they would have increased agency over their circumstances.

Strong interagency communication and information sharing can maximize the value of reentry planning technology by ensuring that all relevant parties are engaged with the technology.

Although this functionality exists in the Pokket tool, this feature was not fully implemented in North Carolina during the study period. As developers work with agencies to develop implementation plans for technological tools, during the planning period it is critical to specify who within the correctional agency or partnering agencies will be responsible for managing the repository. This accountability is key for ensuring that jurisdictions gain the full benefits of implementing tools with service directory features.

The second key takeaway is that staff who participated in interviews for this study acknowledged the value of information sharing as a means of reducing redundancies for all who are involved in the reentry process and facilitating a warm handoff as individuals transition between service providers. Respondents also emphasized the critical importance of engaging multiple stakeholders in the technological tool so that services or information entered is not one-sided. For example, among staff working inside prisons, the additional time and effort required to directly enter information into a web-based platform or provide support to returning citizens who are attempting to use the particular technological tool was felt to be worthwhile only if agencies providing post-release services are going to receive and use the information as well. Effective collaboration among these entities ensures that vital information about the client is accurately and promptly shared, leading to better outcomes in terms of public safety and rehabilitation for individuals on probation (Waring et al., 2022).

Ensure that technology-based tools for correctional settings are flexible and adaptive to meet the diverse needs of various types of corrections agencies.

5

As noted above, reentry planning technology should ideally create a shared space for various providers to engage with clients and access key information about their cases. Although staff who participated in interviews for this study widely endorsed this idea, some respondents had concerns about the burden that could result from unlimited communication. Some noted the importance of being able to personalize various settings and features to account for differences in work conditions and operating norms. For example, staff in prisons raised concerns about clients' being able to message them an unlimited amount (which is also a concern with paper "kites" in correctional institutions) because staff caseloads are too high to support responses to the high volume of messages incarcerated people have the time to send. Staff in the community liked the idea of more communication options with the technological tool because the clients on their caseloads were busier, had more obligations to manage, and had more varied schedules and lifestyles. Connecting with clients after release is more difficult than

Technological applications and tools that are designed to span the full range of correctional and reentry settings should incorporate options that can be tailored to specific settings and users.

during incarceration, and technology-based solutions can help with that challenge by providing a more accessible way to stay in contact. As a result, technological applications and tools that are designed to span the full range of correctional and reentry settings would benefit from incorporating options that can be tailored to specific settings and users.

Create tools with connection in mind. 6

When developing reentry tools, it is essential to prioritize human connection to mitigate the feelings of isolation that often persist from incarceration through the community reentry process. During the interviews with clients, some respondents expressed concerns that technology could replace real human contact and create a stronger sense of isolation, which would be undesirable. Even though people who are incarcerated are physically surrounded by others and have limited privacy, the experience of incarceration may create feelings of social isolation and a general sense of rejection or abandonment by the larger society (Cunha et al., 2023). That feeling may continue as individuals transition through various stages of reentry. Devoting time to meeting with staff who are tasked with aiding reentering people can promote feelings of inclusion and support, while also providing opportunities to practice valuable social skills that will serve returning citizens well as they reintegrate into society. Technology-based tools and resources that are developed specifically to support success in reentry would ideally be designed in ways that supplement and support in-person work, rather than replace it. This is the philosophy underlying the Pokket tool and is the intended utilization model, although it may not always happen in practice.

Relatedly, people who are reentering their communities after an incarceration can easily become overwhelmed by the number of obligations that must be met while transitioning to the community, and some people may have a weak or limited support system to help manage these obstacles. To counterbalance this vulnerability, some interviewees recommended incorporating cohorts or peer mentorship options for learning and using Pokket to help create a supportive social network. By fostering peer connections, these group settings may help individuals feel less isolated and more integrated into a community of others navigating similar transitions.

Another challenge to the reentry transition is that the dynamics that dictate the mechanics of social interactions in a prison setting do not necessarily apply in the larger community. For example, prior research has revealed that interactions that may seem trivial to most citizens, such as someone accidentally bumping into another person, can be very problematic in a prison setting (Western, 2018). People must adapt

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to the different norms and expectations coming into prison and must adapt again to the norms of the community setting upon release. This was highlighted during the interviews, as some individuals mentioned that they experience intense fear and anxiety as they reenter society after incarceration, and they feel uncertainty about how they will navigate the complexities of daily life and reintegrate into their communities. Establishing peer mentorship opportunities that can use technological tools such as Pokket could be a useful approach in creating more supportive connections, fostering a sense of belonging, and equipping people with resources that could make those connections more focused and beneficial. However, correctional institutions would need to be open to the idea of enabling people with criminal histories to work with one another in this manner.

Ensure responsiveness to privacy and specialized needs of clients as end users.

7

Clients may have unique needs that should be considered in both the design of digital tools and the policies and practices surrounding their use in the field. During our interviews, for example, some clients expressed concerns about the extent to which their privacy would be maintained while using the application. As technological reentry planning tools often do have Global Positioning System (GPS) and tracking features, they have the potential to unintentionally serve as a form of surveillance, aligning too closely with electronic monitoring or probation tools (Link & Reese, 2021). As such, some respondents viewed the Pokket application as a helpful tool during incarceration but felt it may be another mechanism to supervise them more closely once they transitioned to the community, similar to an electronic monitoring or a GPS monitoring device. This concern led some respondents to suggest that a toggle feature be added to control location services, allowing users to activate it only when accessing local resources and deactivating it at other times.[3] Additionally, establishing a formal agreement explicitly stating that location data will not be used for surveillance or electronic monitoring purposes, along with clear protocols for how the applications can be integrated into community supervision in ways that are mutually beneficial to clients and staff, will be essential in fostering client interest and trust in using these tools.

Additional considerations for companies that develop technology-based solutions include specifically designing the tool to address barriers that individuals may face in accessing and using web-based applications in the community. Many individuals leave institutions with very little

When developing technology-based tools, it is important to consider privacy and cost constraints that reflect the concerns of individuals returning to the community after a period of incarceration.

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3 In the Pokket tool, the default is for GPS to be deactivated except in the instant the client presses a button to disclose their location.

resources and must prioritize their basic needs (Harding et al., 2014). While communication needs will be critical immediately upon release, it may be exceedingly difficult to obtain an internet-enabled device. Beyond the device needed to use the application, maintaining an adequate data plan or incurring subscription costs will create added financial barriers that may be challenging to overcome in the early days and weeks after release, when the resources available through the technological tool would be most helpful. To truly meet the needs of these users, business models will need to be created that balance the realities of individuals returning to the community after a period of incarceration with the costs to create and maintain the technology-based tools. One approach to alleviate the financial burden on individuals who were formerly incarcerated is to offer support such as subsidized data plans (e.g., Lifeline phones) or temporary access to digital services, ensuring that people can access crucial resources for reintegration without incurring prohibitive expenses. This strategy could help bridge the gap between reentry support and affordability, fostering smoother transitions into the community.

Concluding Thoughts

Integrating technology into corrections and reentry processes holds significant potential to address the challenges faced by individuals reentering society. By increasing communication, providing resources, and improving digital literacy before and after release, technology can ease the transition from incarceration and ultimately lead to better post-release outcomes, such as enhanced employability and stronger social connections. The recommendations from this brief offer insights to companies to aid in overcoming potential barriers, focusing on simplifying tasks, promoting interagency communication, and creating adaptable, user-friendly tools. It is crucial that these tools support, rather than replace, human connection and address concerns about privacy and digital literacy. With careful consideration of the obstacles clients will face after release comes an opportunity for technology to greatly improve reentry outcomes, fostering a smoother and more successful reintegration into society.

With careful consideration of the obstacles clients will face after release comes an opportunity for technology to greatly improve reentry outcomes.

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