

# Supporting reentry for incarcerated older adults: Occupational therapy's role on a specialized unit

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## Purpose

In the United States older adults (55+) now comprise nearly 10% of the incarcerated population and are the fastest growing demographic. Older adults in custody face unique social and occupational challenges including isolation, cognitive decline, loss of mobility, and disruption of employment histories that make reentry into the workforce particularly difficult. A partnership between a short-term correctional facility and an occupational therapy academic program collaborated to develop a specialized unit for older adult reentry.



# Occupational Therapy's Role

## Environmental Assessment and Modification



## Correctional Officer Training

- Increased work satisfaction, health
- Increased sense of safety
- Greater sense of humanity
- Decreased punitive actions



## Occupational Therapy Intervention

### Group and Individual

Role and routine development

Life skill-building

Coping strategies

Support for reentry and recovery

*“For the first time, I feel like I have a plan. I’m not just hoping things work out—I’m actually preparing for what’s next.”* - OAR resident

# Conclusion

- Worldwide, OT practitioners have the skills and knowledge to support older adults who are incarcerated, as well as support the transition out of the criminal justice system, and to promote occupational justice within the system.
- To do so requires training and education for individuals working within a correctional facility on OT's potential role and the specific needs of older adults within a correctional setting.

