



Center for  
Employment  
Opportunities

## Returning Citizens Stimulus (*RCS*) Program

In April 2020, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) conceived and implemented the Returning Citizen Stimulus (RCS) program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. With over \$24M distributed, **it is the largest-ever conditional cash transfer** to formerly incarcerated individuals.

RCS promotes public safety, public health, fairness, and access to opportunities that benefit Returning Citizens, their families, and the larger community. As states and cities across the country accelerated releases during COVID-19, those leaving incarceration and recently released, working in hard hit sectors of the economy, lacked access to employment opportunities and federal and state unemployment assistance. RCS provided these job seekers with immediate assistance allowing them to support themselves and their families, while also encouraging states to safely release more individuals from incarceration and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

### Purpose and Objectives

The RCS program provides immediate financial support to people returning from incarceration during the pandemic. It was designed to connect individuals to services in the community and create long-term engagements between returning citizens and reentry service providers. A key objective was to show that over the long-term and with proper support, communities can successfully reintegrate returning citizens, at scale. The RCS program sought to create policy changes that support reentry efforts, both during COVID-19 and in the future.

ceo

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The RCS program supports participants to overcome common financial barriers that formerly incarcerated individuals face on reentry. Participants receive monthly stipends provided they meet mutually agreed upon milestones with local reentry providers. The milestones are modest, meaningful, and aligned with the individual participants' needs and the services offered by the organization.

The RCS program demonstrates how cash assistance and services can accelerate decarceration. CEO is furthering RCS in a post-pandemic context to advance decarceration efforts (e.g. through early release, advanced parole, or resentencing). One pilot project, already underway in California in partnership with For The People, focuses on people who have been released due to a prosecutor initiated resentencing.

## How it ——— Works

^ **10,400** Individuals

^ **\$24M** Issued Payments



Stipends Distributed by  
**32 Partner Organizations**

RCS candidates receive...

**Up to \$2,750**

(Three payments, for a total of up to **\$2,250** in lower cost of living cities and **\$2,750** in higher cost of living cities.)

### Looking Ahead

Evaluations of RCS and similar projects will build the evidence base around reentry cash assistance, both as a valid reentry service and as a part of a broader movement to get cash and other immediate resources directly into the hands of those who need it most.