

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
**OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS**

Innovation • Partnerships • Safer Neighborhoods



# OJP FACT SHEET

November 2011

## Faith-Based Programs

The faith community has long been an important force in improving public safety and promoting neighborhood revitalization. In fulfilling their mission to lift up those in need, faith-based institutions historically have provided counseling and other vital services to prisoners, victims, and community members affected by crime. Unlike their secular counterparts, many faith-based organizations are often uniquely suited to bring together residents and local leaders to address pressing challenges and to empower people to improve their lives, the lives of their family members, and their communities at large.

*Instead of driving us apart, our varied beliefs can bring us together.*

—President Barack Obama

### Background

Throughout our nation's history, faith-based and community groups have served both as a source of comfort to those in need as well as vehicles of redemption for those who have erred. Faith leaders are often the first to be sought by grieving families and others who have suffered the pain of victimization. At the same time, faith-based counselors help guide criminal offenders on the path to positive change. Working toward the goal of spiritual renewal, faith-based groups strive to restore hope after a tragedy and provide a second chance after a transgression.

The relationship between the federal government and faith-based and community groups has strengthened over the past decade. As a result, faith-based and other nonprofit organizations now have equal opportunity to access federal resources.

Since its creation in 2009, the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships has worked to improve collaboration between the federal government and faith-based and neighborhood organizations to more effectively serve Americans in need. In fulfilling this goal, President Obama established an advisory council composed of religious and secular leaders and scholars to guide the office.

The Department of Justice is one of 12 federal agencies that includes a Center for Faith-based and Community Initiatives coordinated by the White House program. As a central part of the department's efforts, the Office of Justice Programs assists faith-based groups with programs and initiatives throughout the criminal justice spectrum, ranging from youth violence prevention to crime victim assistance to prisoner reentry.

### What OJP Is Doing

The **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention** (OJJDP) supports the Accessing Resources for Community and Faith-based Organizations (ARC) Initiative, which delivers training and technical assistance to community-based, faith-based, and nonprofit organizations to enhance their capacity to compete for federal funding, form partnerships, and revitalize communities. These efforts are designed to help faith and community organizations participate in federal grant opportunities by empowering them to overcome the regulatory, contracting, and other programmatic obstacles that historically have impeded their access to federal resources

The **Bureau of Justice Assistance** (BJA) supports collaboration between state and local agencies and faith-based and community organizations to meet the needs of offenders returning to their communities from prisons and jails. Under the Second Chance Act, BJA funds reentry programs across the country, providing services ranging from substance abuse treatment to housing. Faith-based groups have a role in many of these programs; BJA and other public and private organizations have funded guides for involving the faith community in reentry efforts. These resources are available through the **National**

### FAST FACTS

- There are more than 350,000 religious congregations in the United States. The average congregation has 100–400 members.
- U.S. congregations generate an estimated \$81 billion annually in revenues, much of which is used to support programs that address social needs.
- Faith-based institutions engage 45 million volunteers, nearly half of the total number of American volunteers.
- Virtually all U.S. prison systems offer faith-based worship services; 93 percent also offer prayer groups.

**Sources:** *America's Religious Congregations: Measuring Their Contributions to Society; Corrections Compendium*

### Contact Us

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## Reentry Resource Center.

The **Office for Victims of Crime** (OVC) has made funds available to promote greater participation by community and faith-based organizations in victim services. In addition to supporting local faith-based victim assistance programs, OVC has developed a video, "**Faith-based Responses to Crime Victims**," designed to encourage faith-based/victim services partnerships.

The **National Institute of Justice** (NIJ) has sponsored research pertinent to the faith community and, in particular, faith-based and community nonprofit organizations serving the field of criminal justice. This research includes studies that examine the benefits and hazards found within faith-based programs, and a 2004 project that resulted in a guide, *Development of a Guide to Resources on Faith-Based Organizations in Criminal Justice*, for policymakers on promising faith-based organizational resources and programs working in criminal justice. More information on these efforts and others can be located on the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) Web sites listed below.

## Resources

- [The Accessing Resources for Community and Faith-based Organizations Initiative](#)
- [White House Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships](#)
- [National Criminal Justice Reference Service, Faith-Based Resources](#)
- [Bureau of Justice Assistance, Faith-based and Community Initiatives](#)
- [OVC's Video Library](#)
- [Development of a Guide to Resources on Faith-Based Organizations in Criminal Justice](#)

## Office of Justice Programs

Bureau of Justice Assistance • Bureau of Justice Statistics • National Institute of Justice  
Office for Victims of Crime • Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  
Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking