

Gang Alternative Inc. — Project ReWIND

Introduction

Gang Alternatives' Project ReWIND (Returning with Initiative, Networks, and Determination) is based in South Florida, serving youth across Broward, Dade, and Palm Beach counties. The organization identified a critical issue for youth returning to their communities. The youth transitioning from secure confinement to their communities often face stigma, discrimination, exclusion, and rejection. Many return to families and home environments impacted by societal challenges like poverty, housing instability, substance use, and underemployment. Even those motivated to reenter school often feel disengaged, which frequently leads to dropping out.

Program Description

In response to these challenges, Gang Alternatives pursued the Second Chance Act grant to launch ReWIND. The program's primary goal is to ensure successful reentry by addressing the complex barriers and risk factors associated with youth recidivism. ReWIND achieves this by providing essential services such as navigational case management, assessments, counseling, employment support, vocational and academic training, credentialing, mentoring, life skills development, financial literacy, and wraparound family coordination. By offering these comprehensive services, ReWIND equips youth with the tools and support they need to overcome obstacles and build a successful future. The project aims to ease youth's experience returning to their communities through academic and occupational skills training coupled with case management, mental health supports, and connection to essential social services (e.g., housing, transportation, and food).

Key Components and Success Stories

Since its inception, ReWIND has achieved remarkable success. From the start, the team's dedication to supporting young people, paired with their expertise, was clear. They were well-prepared and hit the ground running, wasting no time in getting to work. The team swiftly navigated any challenges they encountered, adapting with ease.

ReWIND Connects Youth to Stability

The program supports youth pre- and post-release by providing the following services.

- Individual and family-based case management
- Life skills, occupational skills, and soft skills training
- Work readiness training
- Job placement and retention services
- Other support services identified through assessments including emergency needs (transportation, housing, food, work clothes) and trauma-focused cognitive behavior therapy.

Recently, three youth—Brayden, Timothy, and Jerry¹—graduated from high school through the ReWIND program. Brayden and Timothy both graduated a year ahead of schedule. Brayden plans to attend a post-secondary institution to study Foreign Language and Education, with aspirations of becoming an ESL teacher. Timothy aims to obtain his Domestic Wastewater Operator Certification and work as a Wastewater Treatment Specialist. Jerry plans to earn his CDL license and eventually start his own trucking company.

With bright futures ahead, Brayden, Timothy, and Jerry are well on their way to success. With the continued support of their families and Gang Alternatives, there is no doubt they will achieve everything they set their minds to—and so much more.

Looking Ahead

Management at ReWIND believes that services should be participant-driven and adult-guided to maximize engagement and outcomes. They emphasize that follow-up and consistency are key to success. Additionally, they stress that the way you begin often determines how you finish, making the initial contact crucial for building trust and setting the foundation for long-term success.

ReWIND has developed a strong sustainability plan and is now focused on evaluating the program's effectiveness. The initiative will be sustained through the Employment and Industry Advisory Committee, as well as the Re-entry Task Force. The next step in the plan is to have the program evaluated by an independent local evaluator. This evaluator will work with the team to analyze data, conduct focus groups, and collect feedback through surveys. The insights gathered will help measure the program's impact and identify areas for ongoing improvement.

Learn More: Since 2005, Gang Alternatives, Inc. has leveraged community-driven and resource development approaches to address high crime, violence, dependency, and delinquency. All work is rooted in challenging the “gang mentality” through a Five Pillars of Service approach. Pillars include Positive Youth Development, Family Strengthening, Workforce

¹ Pseudonyms used to protect young people's anonymity.

Development, Community Upliftment and Partnerships, and Health and Wellness. More about the program can be found on their website, www.MyGA.org.

ABOUT YRTTAC

The Youth Reentry Training and Technical Assistance Center (YRTTAC), administered by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and housed at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), supports capacity-building efforts among 50+ Second Chance Act Reentry grantees. YRTTAC focuses heavily on best practices in successful reentry of youth and young adults returning to their communities who are in out of home placement, like detention and juvenile justice secure state operated facilities. Our technical assistance is designed to build the capabilities of grantees in reentry and navigation of their Second Chance Act grant and is accomplished through individualized coaching, development of resources, and curating peer-to-peer learning events. This approach braids research, programmatic innovations, lived expertise, and best practices to improve the youth reentry field. Learn more about YRTTAC [here](#).

