



NATIONAL CRIME  
PREVENTION COUNCIL

MISSION  
STATEMENT

*To enable people to create safer and more caring communities by addressing the causes of crime and violence and reducing the opportunities for crime to occur.*

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) is a private, nonprofit tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] organization whose primary mission is to enable people to create safer and more caring communities by addressing the causes of crime and violence and reducing the opportunities for crime to occur.

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# Introduction

In the United States more than 140 million people consider themselves to be members of a community of faith<sup>1</sup>. Many in these communities seek to live out their faith by making their communities better and safer places to live. They work to prevent crime from happening by participating in efforts such as Neighborhood Watch, but they also focus on the situation of offenders and prisoners by offering prison ministries and reentry programs that seek to break the cycle of crime and incarceration. They give attention to at-risk children and youth, mentoring children of prisoners, working with gang-involved youth, and providing alternative sentencing options for juvenile offenders.

*Faith Community and Criminal Justice Collaboration: A Collection of Effective Programs* looks at how people of faith work with or in criminal justice institutions to reconcile, restore, and nurture individuals back into families and communities. You'll read about people of faith serving across the entire criminal justice spectrum, from alternative programs for juveniles to support services for newly released ex-offenders. Crime will find less opportunity wherever religious communities weave networks with criminal justice organizations.

The people who are involved in these programs come from different faith traditions, but they have something in common: they want to prevent the suffering caused by crime and to provide healing where crime has occurred. The Jewish community speaks of *tikkun olam*—to repair the world. Christians follow one who said he was bringing "release to the captives." People of Islamic faith feel a deep commitment to social justice. Buddhists speak of the "Middle Path." The call to bring healing and to restore communities unites people of different religions, races, and ethnicities.

Criminal justice organizations benefit greatly from the involvement of people of faith. They provide an enormous resource of highly motivated volunteers and professionals who work to prevent crime by offering at-risk youth positive alternatives to gang membership and criminal activity; providing alternative sentencing options for substance abusers, shoplifters, and juveniles; and seeking to engage program participants in their neighborhoods and communi-

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ties. People of faith work within prisons as well, offering programs that have been shown to decrease the risk of recidivism, such as helping prisoners maintain connections with their families, providing assistance with education programs, and developing reentry plans that ease the transition into the community. Faith communities provide various aftercare ministries that seek to prevent ex-offenders from returning to criminal activity. In all of these programs, they extend the reach and the efforts of criminal justice organizations; they create important relationships of trust with youth and ex-offenders that can be a powerful influence for good; and they help mobilize communities to address the causes of crime and violence.

We call this publication “A Collection,” but it is only a sampling of what is happening wherever people of faith and criminal justice agencies work in creative partnerships to prevent crime and to address its effects. Although the document has a broad sweep, we know that there are many more programs being done by people working together to make good things happen. We hope that this publication will inspire you to forge effective partnerships, develop programs that work, and then share them with your colleagues.

