

## A LOOK INTO RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS

*By: Raul Malagon*

My name is Raul Malagon. In 2018, I was sentenced to 66 months in Federal prison for a non-violent drug offense. I was released in early October of 2020 on the Cares Act due to being at high risk of catching COVID. I was sent home to finish the remainder of my sentence on home confinement through the halfway house, which was a total of 14 months. During my time on home confinement, I was limited to the things I could do. There were certain rules in place that I had to follow and if I didn't do what was asked, the consequence would be to get written up and or possibly go back to prison to finish my sentence. The rules seemed pretty simple at first. You really just had to stay out of trouble, provide clean UA's (urine analysis) and only go to places you were allowed to, such as work or wherever your approved social pass for the week was to. You also had to call in every eight hours to do your accountability this was another way to check in with the halfway house to make sure you were where you were suppose to be. There were times when the whole process got a bit annoying, such as when I had a GPS ankle monitor on my foot and was still required to call in four to five times a day to verbally give my location. Despite having a job that required me to wake up early, I still had to set an alarm for 12am to do my accountability call, otherwise failure to do so would result into a write up and or possibly being removed from home into the actual halfway house.

Also, I was only able to work late when approved. I had to submit a request the day before and my case manager had to approve my request in order for me to work longer hours. This was very frustrating because from time to time I did get behind at work and had to stay late to accommodate my clients and honor their appointments. Another thing I didn't like was not being able to make any stops on my way home from work. So, if I needed to pump gas, pickup milk from the grocery store for my toddler or snacks, I couldn't because it wasn't approved ahead of time. The rule was for us to do our grocery and hygiene shopping on the same day as our social pass. I did not like having to spend my approved social pass time doing those things. Instead, I wanted that time to be dedicated to my family and doing fun things with my children.

I do feel like there are certain rules and regulations that can be changed with the halfway house. I think the halfway house should focus more on the people who don't have a home to come out to and be more supportive to those who really need it. I was very fortunate to have my family support and a home to come to. I felt like I was wasting the resources the halfway house provided to

me because they could have been used for someone else who really needed it. Despite it all, I was very grateful to have the opportunity to be home early with my wife and kids. I was also able to continue my career as a full-time barber.

I managed to do pretty well and I got through my home confinement without any incidents. Finally, I was released from home confinement to public law to serve a three year supervised release term with the United States of Probation Office in the Western District of Missouri.

I was released to probation on December 8th of 2021. I was excited to be able to have more freedom and to be able to socialize with family and friends who I hadn't since before incarceration. The probation rules were simple. Pretty much just stay out of trouble, clean UA's. I learned about the Re-Entry program and knew I wanted to join it. Upon completion of this program, you would be eligible to have your supervised release reduced in half. The program consists of going in front of a judge at the court house twice a month for the first four months, and once a month for the remainder of the time. It is a year long program. About a month into my supervised release, I was accepted into the program. I was also required to see a counselor at Rediscover drug and alcohol treatment center that was part of the program as well. It really helped to be able to talk to somebody about the different life events that occurred from being incarcerated, like being away from family, and how to amend those relationships back to how things were before my prison term. I learned that I had PTSD-like symptoms from being incarcerated. I had to learn how to deal with the numerous psychological challenges from now being labeled as a felon. Having thoughts of guilt, shame, confusion and recidivism hanging over my head. With the help from the counselors at Rediscover, I felt more at ease.

The whole reentry court ordeal was kind of scary at first . I don't think anyone who has been sentenced before wants to go back in front of a judge, especially if it has to be a few times a month.

Apart from getting the time off from my supervised release, I feel like it helped me to stay on track and focus on how to be a productive member of society.

I am currently a year into reentry court and will be graduating March 2, 2023. From my personal experience, I feel like there should be more programs like the Re-entry program to be able to help other men and women be released earlier. Especially for individuals who are on the right track and have no intent or desire to return to prison and want to change their lives for good. The Re-entry program has been great to me but I very much disliked being on home confinement through the halfway house prior to starting my supervised release. This whole experience has taught me how valuable freedom is and has made me a more humble individual. I hope that this article will help those who are going through the reentry phase, post-incarceration, to stay positive.