

AZ JUDICIAL CONFERENCE

*Voices of Inmate
Release Court:
Where Are They
Now?*



Voices of IRC Where Are They Now?

A Future Bigger Than the Past



2026 Arizona Judicial Conference



Meet the Panel



Janita Zendejas
IRC Program Coordinator

AOC



Josh Johnson
Community Advocate with
Lived Experience

**America's Rehab
Campus**



George Nolan
Director of Marketing

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SCC Case Manager

ADCRR



Sophia Jackson
Reentry Employment
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DES





Agenda

- Beginnings
- Program Experience
- Life Today & Looking Forward
- IRC – The Game Changer
- Closing remarks

Did you know?

- Arizona is the 19th highest incarcerator in the world with 35,545 people serving a prison sentence.
- 35% of Arizonans (1 in 3) have a criminal record.
- Over the past decade, AZ has released more than 17,000 individuals per year (approx. 170,000).
- 93.2% of people who are incarcerated will eventually return to society.
- Many individuals will return to incarceration due to systematic barriers to employment, housing, and support.

“

You are not your worst
moment.

- George

”

Beginnings

What motivated you to become a facilitator/participant in the Second Chance Program, and what were your initial expectations?



“

When you take the time to
hear their story, you will
stop judging.

- Mr. Rogers

”

Program Experience



- What part of the SCC program had the greatest impact on you, and why?
- Were there any moments during the program that challenged your mindset or perspective?
- What challenges did you see individuals face while enrolled in SCC?
- What are the top barriers that program participants and returning citizens face?

Life Today & Looking Forward

- How did the program help you prepare for employment and life after incarceration?
- How did the SCC program support—such as job readiness, mentoring, or structure that helped you stay focused?



“

The greatest good is what
we do for one another.

- Mother Teresa

”



IRC Program

The **Inmate Release Court (IRC) Program** is a statewide initiative of the Arizona Judicial Branch.

Enables inmates participating in the **Second Chance Program** to reenter society without the financial burden of outstanding court case balances or additional sanctions, such as driver's license suspensions and open warrants, that could hinder their successful reintegration into society.

The Game Changer



- What impacts of the IRC Program were visible to you?
- How do programs like IRC help returning citizens with their reintegration into society?

IRC Program Stats Inception - Current Date

Participating LJ Courts	148
Average Participant:	(3) Open Cases Owes \$2,500
Number of Participants Referred	3030
Number of LJ Cases Referred	9450
Total Amt Referred	\$7.5M
Total Amt Mitigated	\$3.8M
Total in Comm. Restitution Credit	\$269K



“

If not me, then who?
If not now, then when?

”

Closing Remarks

- What advice would you give courts, employers, or community partners about supporting returning citizens?
- How can programs like SCC and IRC change not only individual lives, but families and communities?



Questions





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