

PRE-ENTRY PROGRAMS ASSOCIATE

JOB OPENING



The Tennessee Higher Education Initiative (THEI) is a nonprofit organization working to disrupt systems of harm and create opportunities for autonomy and success by providing college access to people inside Tennessee prisons, preparing students for skillful re-entry, and reducing barriers to continued education and achievement. THEI is a grassroots, community organization committed to principles of harm reduction, healing, and centering the lived experiences of the people we serve. We engage in reimagining and building towards the world we want to see through systems work and direct service.

Tennessee Higher Education Initiative (THEI) seeks a full-time **Pre-entry Programs Associate**. Under the direction of the Transitional Programs Manager, the Pre-entry Programs Associate is responsible for providing comprehensive pre-release planning and support services to justice-impacted individuals during the critical 12 months prior to their release from Tennessee correctional facilities. This essential role focuses on developing comprehensive and durable reentry plans through monthly meetings with participants, ensuring they have the knowledge, resources, and support systems necessary for successful community reintegration.

The position is full-time with regular travel across Tennessee to prison facilities. Some overnight travel will be required. The ideal candidate will demonstrate strong relationship-building skills, case planning abilities, and experience in long-term goal setting and preparation planning. This role requires patience, consistency, and the ability to work within the constraints of correctional environments while building meaningful connections with individuals preparing for reentry.

Priority will be given to applicants who demonstrate a strong commitment to providing service to at-risk populations and understand the mission of THEI to be located within a larger social-justice movement. We seek candidates who have experience in case management, reentry planning, or educational counseling; excellent communication and planning skills; and a strong commitment to breaking cycles of poverty and incarceration. **We encourage people who have been impacted by the criminal justice system to consider applying.**

ESSENTIAL DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Long-Term Pre-Release Planning & Case Management

- Initiate contact with THEI students 12 months prior to their scheduled release date to begin comprehensive reentry planning process
- Conduct monthly meetings with participants to assess progress, update reentry plans, and address emerging needs or concerns



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- Develop comprehensive and durable reentry plans in collaboration with participants, incorporating their goals, strengths, educational aspirations, and identified support needs
- Create individualized case plans that address housing, employment, education, healthcare, family reunification, and personal development goals
- Monitor and document progress toward established goals through regular assessments and plan updates
- When appropriate, coordinate with Education Coordinators and other THEI staff to ensure continuity and support during the pre-release period
- Maintain detailed case files documenting all interactions, goal progress, resource connections, and plan modifications

Educational Continuity & Academic Planning

- Support participants in completing their educational goals while incarcerated and planning for continued education post-release
- Coordinate with college partners to ensure smooth academic transitions and enrollment processes for post-release education
- Assist with college applications, financial aid processes, and academic placement planning during the pre-release period
- Connect participants with educational resources, scholarship opportunities, and support services available in their release communities
- Facilitate educational workshops and information sessions focused on post-secondary education options and career pathways
- Support participants in developing academic and career goals that align with their interests and community opportunities

Resource Connection & Pre-Release Coordination

- Research and connect participants with housing resources, employment opportunities, and community services in their intended release locations
- Facilitate connections with community-based organizations, service providers, and support networks prior to release
- Coordinate with family members and support systems to prepare for successful reunification and community reintegration

Life Skills Development & Preparation

- Facilitate individual coaching sessions and group workshops focused on essential reentry skills including budgeting, job searching, technology use, and community navigation
- Provide guidance on practical reentry challenges such as obtaining identification, opening bank accounts, and accessing transportation
- Support participants in developing communication and relationship skills for successful family reunification and community integration

Partnership Development & Community Engagement

- Build and maintain relationships with community service providers, employers, housing programs, and educational institutions in participants' release areas
- Coordinate with TDOC reentry staff, case managers, and facility administrators to ensure seamless information sharing and collaborative planning
- Engage with family members and support networks to prepare them for participants' return and facilitate healthy reunification
- Build relationships with employers willing to hire justice-impacted individuals and provide information about available opportunities

Documentation & Program Evaluation

- Maintain comprehensive records using organizational database systems (Salesforce) with attention to privacy and confidentiality requirements
- Complete regular progress reports and case updates for supervisory review and program evaluation purposes
- Track outcome data including educational progress, goal achievement, resource connections, and preparation milestones
- Document service referrals, resource connections, and partnership engagement for program improvement and replication
- Participate in program evaluation activities and provide feedback for continuous program improvement
- Prepare participants for transfer to post-release support services and ensure seamless transitions to community-based programming

REQUIRED CAPABILITIES, SKILLS, & KNOWLEDGE

Core Requirements

- Associate or Bachelor's degree in Social Work, Human Services, Criminal Justice, Education, or related field
- 2+ years of experience in case management, reentry programming, educational counseling, or related direct service work
- Demonstrated experience working with justice-impacted populations or individuals preparing for major life transitions
- Strong understanding of reentry challenges and barriers faced by formerly incarcerated individuals
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills with ability to build trust and maintain long-term professional relationships
- Experience with goal setting, action planning, and long-term case management approaches
- Knowledge of community resources including housing, employment, education, and social services

- Proficiency in database management systems (Salesforce preferred), Microsoft Office Suite, and case management documentation
- Valid driver's license and reliable transportation for regular travel to correctional facilities across Tennessee
- Flexible schedule including ability to accommodate facility scheduling requirements and occasional evening meetings
- Ability to work independently while maintaining regular communication with supervisory team and program partners
- Cultural competence in working with diverse populations and understanding of systemic barriers to reentry
- Strong organizational skills with attention to detail and ability to manage multiple cases simultaneously
- Commitment to trauma-informed, strength-based approaches to working with justice-impacted individuals
- Ability to maintain professional boundaries while providing supportive and empathetic services

Relational Requirements

- Collaborative and communicative approach to working across teams with proactive outreach and correspondence skills
- Ability to navigate challenging professional partnership relationships with respect and resourcefulness
- Openness to creative problem-solving and working in ambiguous situations
- Commitment to self-care and healthy boundary setting while maintaining professional relationships
- Willingness to co-create an "uncommon work culture" through shared commitment to community agreements

Social Justice Requirements

- Strong commitment to providing service to at-risk populations and understanding THEI's mission within the larger social justice movement
- Strong commitment to breaking cycles of poverty and incarceration
- Commitment to use Person First and humanizing language in all interactions
- Cultural competence in working with diverse populations and justice-impacted individuals

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

This is a full-time, exempt position with a salary of \$50,000 plus travel reimbursements, comprehensive medical/dental insurance, a monthly wellness stipend, Simple IRA with employer match, professional development opportunities, generous paid leave and holidays, and flexible work arrangements.



THEI is an equal-opportunity employer; all applicants will be considered for employment without attention to race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, veteran or disability status.

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter and resume to work@thei.org with "Pre-entry Programs Associate" in the subject line.

