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Released prisoners get more time to reacclimate

By: Erin Vannella

The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision is acting upon recommendations received from its own staff members at a labor/management summit. The man we talked to, who was released in May, says it could change lives. Our Erin Vannella reports.

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ALBANY, N.Y. -- "My name is Clinton and I was recently released from prison," said ex-convict Clinton Wimberly. "And I was given a temporary ID card."

Clinton Wimberly hit the streets again in May, but his Standard Offender ID only gives him two months to reacclimate to society.

"To open up a bank account, you need identification," said Wimberly. "To get a job, you need identification and just so many areas that you need identification."

It's 60 days, ultimately, that Wimberly said gives him and others released from prison barely enough time to acquire permanent identification, like a birth certificate or license. And that's why the state's Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Wednesday, extended the card's expiration date to 90 days.

"It gives us another month and there's a lot of confusion in that month, two months, three months that has to go on," said Father Peter Young, creator of the Peter Young Foundation. "We have to try to guide them into a way of recovery and smooth the path."

Father Peter Young's Foundation has helped treat, house and train ex-convicts like Wimberly for 54 years. His staff members say more time will be invaluable.

"They want to reestablish family ties, obtain some gainful employment and obtain affordable housing," said Community Based Residential Program Director Michael Westbrook. "From what I've seen in the last couple years, coming out a lot of people don't have proper ID. The lifestyle they led, they lost everything from driver's license and birth certificate to social security card."

Father Young calls it a win-win. Someone like Wimberly, he says, is getting a second chance and he deserves time to get it right.

"This community supervision here that they're doing gives us a chance to be a part of their team and be able to work with a client in a more intelligent way," said Father Young.

The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision says the extension should help ward off issues that incline offenders to land back in prison.

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