

FORGE

Facilitating Opportunities for Reentry, Growth & Empowerment

Purpose and Mission

FORGE is a peer-led, evidence-based mentorship program designed to build a safer, more stable dorm culture by training men to lead through service, accountability, and conflict reduction. The mission of FORGE is to develop mentors who lead by example, create environments where violence is discouraged, and live the principle of Service Over Self—turning time served into time that serves others.

FORGE is built around a simple but demanding leadership belief: **leadership begins when individuals stop living only for themselves and take responsibility for building others.** In a correctional environment, this means choosing restraint over reaction, accountability over avoidance, and stability over chaos.

What FORGE Is

FORGE is a structured mentorship model designed to strengthen and support peer-led evidence-based programming. Its primary purpose is to prepare incarcerated individuals to become peer mentors who can safely and responsibly facilitate evidence-based programs in other dorms and housing units. The idea is to **spread the virus.** Only this virus is to help bring structure and safety to prisons.

Rather than relying on informal influence or personality-driven leadership, FORGE provides structure. Participants are trained to mentor others consistently, reduce conflict before it escalates into violence, model pro-social decision-making, and help establish a dorm culture defined by respect, accountability, and safety.

As described in the FORGE handbook, the program is about **building a new prison experience**—one where men lead by example, support one another, and prepare to make a positive impact both inside the facility and beyond it.

Evidence-Based Programming Model

Evidence-based programming refers to approaches grounded in research—programs shown to reduce harm, change thinking, and improve outcomes during incarceration and after release. Within the Georgia Department of Corrections, programs such as RISE and Pathfinders reflect this approach.

These programs also cultivate peer mentors. FORGE builds on this foundation by serving as an advanced track for those mentors, equipping them to facilitate and support evidence-based programming in additional dorms.

The Stakeholder Model

FORGE is grounded in the reality that both staff and inmates will recognize: **safety and rehabilitation are not automatic.** They require work, daily choices, consistent expectations, and credible leadership inside housing units.

In the last 6 years, we as inmates have seen violence sky-rocket. Not just murders, but stabbings and fights, many of which are never even reported. **Things must change. We all want to go home one day.** This includes staff and inmates. Because of this, many of us see that we must take on some of the responsibilities to build our own rehabilitation system to create a safer environment to live in.

We've come to recognize that **WE are stakeholders** in this system. Inmates do not want to be incarcerated. But many understand that the conditions they live in can be shaped heavily by peer behavior—how conflicts are handled, how pressure is applied, and whether violence is encouraged or discouraged. FORGE intends to channel this reality into a structured, accountable role where peer influence is used to reduce harm rather than amplify it. Where we build mentors that can facilitate peer-led rehabilitation programs in all the dorms at Dooly to change the prison experience.

In recognizing that we are stakeholders in this system, we recognize that we have a part to play in safety and rehabilitation. This does not mean granting authority or shifting responsibility away from staff. It means acknowledging a practical truth: inmate behavior and inmate culture play a decisive role in whether dorms remain stable or become volatile.

Being a stakeholder within FORGE means accepting responsibility for the shared environment. Participants are expected to act with the understanding that their actions affect not only themselves, but everyone living around them—including staff. This model supports facility safety goals by reducing “heat” inside dorms, discouraging violence and intimidation, and reinforcing norms that make rehabilitation possible.

Importantly, the stakeholder model does not replace staff authority. It complements it by creating a disciplined peer culture that supports order rather than undermines it.

How FORGE Works

Leadership Through Service

FORGE defines **leadership as responsibility, not status.** Participants are trained to act in ways that make the dorm safer, the people around them more stable, and the overall environment more manageable.

Leadership in FORGE is demonstrated through daily behavior: **being the example others can follow**, serving the needs of the dorm before personal interests, **protecting the culture from violence and intimidation**, and **passing knowledge forward to others.** This is not **symbolic leadership**—it is practical, observable, and accountable.

Safety is non-negotiable. Weapons, threats, and violence are not tolerated within the program. Possession of a weapon or promotion of violence results in removal from FORGE, without exception.

Simulation-Based Training

A defining feature of FORGE is simulation-based training. Rather than relying solely on discussion, mentors/mentees **practice** responding to **realistic scenarios that mirror** the situations they face inside the facility and during reentry preparation.

Simulations mirror common dorm conflicts, manipulation and peer pressure, escalation triggers, ethical decision points, and reentry-related stressors. This approach allows mentors to practice judgment, communication, and restraint in controlled settings, reducing trial-and-error risk.

Simulations help mentors/mentees practice applying communication skills, ethical judgment, de-escalation techniques, and leadership principles in real time. This prepares the mentee/mentor to respond responsibly when situations arise, reducing reliance on improvisation or reaction.

Code of Conduct and Accountability

FORGE operates under a clear Code of Conduct that sets expectations for integrity, service, learning, safety, and community behavior. Violence, intimidation, weapons, and gang signaling are explicitly prohibited.

Accountability is essential to program credibility. When standards are violated, participants are removed to protect the integrity of the program and the safety of the dorm.

Why Staff Should Care

FORGE is designed to support facility safety and operational goals. By training credible peer mentors, the program reduces dorm conflict through early de-escalation, reinforces consistent standards, discourages weapons and intimidation, and strengthens evidence-based programming by providing reliable facilitators.

The intended outcome is a safer, more stable environment **where rehabilitation can actually take root—benefiting inmates and staff alike.**

Conflict Resolution: De-escalation First

A central function of FORGE is **teaching mentors how to reduce conflict quickly** while preserving dignity. Participants are trained to recognize escalation early and intervene in ways that slow situations down rather than intensify them.

The conflict-resolution process emphasizes posture, tone, facts over assumptions, identifying needs and options, and checking back for resolution. Mentors are trained to avoid behaviors that increase risk, including threats, weapons talk, or claims of gang authority.

When a situation **exceeds the scope of peer intervention** or presents a **safety concern**, mentors are trained to **disengage and refer appropriately. The goal is stability, not control.**

Standards That Stabilize Dorm Life

FORGE establishes **clear dorm standards** focused on respect, cleanliness, quiet, property boundaries, and safety. These standards are not about control for its own sake; they are about predictability and stability in a shared living environment.

Participants are taught that **every action**—how someone speaks, how they handle conflict, how they respect shared space—**affects everyone else.** When the environment is protected, tension decreases. When tension decreases, both safety and rehabilitation improve.

Measuring Results

The FORGE program will provide data-rich information on the success of each class and the program alike for evaluating all outcomes, including trends in incidents, mentor participation and completion, program engagement, and qualitative feedback from staff and participants.



What is FORGE?

FORGE is a peer-led mentorship program that trains incarcerated men to become leaders who reduce conflict and build safer dorms.

We've seen violence skyrocket over the last six years. **This must change.** We all want to go home one day—staff and inmates alike.

FORGE recognizes that **WE are stakeholders** in this system. The conditions we live in are shaped by peer behavior—how conflicts are handled, whether violence is encouraged or discouraged. We take responsibility for the shared environment.

Through **simulation-based training**, mentors practice de-escalation, conflict resolution, and ethical decision-making under realistic pressure—so they're prepared before situations arise.

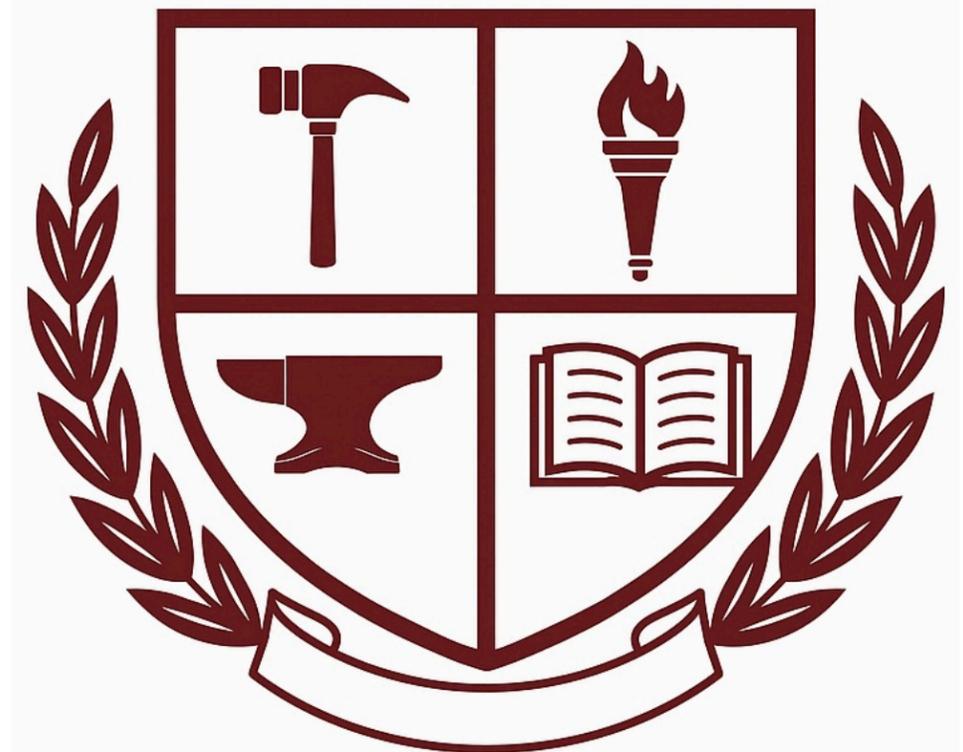
The goal: a safer environment to live in, where rehabilitation can actually take root. To turn time served into time that serves others.

FORGE is more than a program. It is a disciplined approach to building a safer culture through responsibility, restraint, and service. By recognizing that we are stakeholders FORGE strengthens peer leadership, reduces instability, supports evidence-based programming, contributes to safer, more manageable housing units and supports rehabilitation efforts at Dooly State Prison.

Leadership is not granted.

It is forged.

FORGE



We're building a new prison experience — where men lead by example, support one another, and prepare to make a positive impact — both inside these walls and beyond them.

Our goal is simple:

To turn time served into time that serves others.

Our Purpose:

To build mentors who create a culture of peace, responsibility, and service — modeling the change we want to see in every community.