

Career Centers in Iowa Prisons

*A partnership of the Iowa Workforce
Development, Department of
Corrections.*



LINKING WORKFORCE WITH OFFENDERS

**An innovative Strategy To Improve
Offenders' Ability To Find And Retain
Productive Employment In Iowa**

How The Program Works?

Referrals to Program Are Established Through the Reentry Case Management Process.

Risk and Needs assessments are completed. Need areas include:

- Attitudes/Orientation
- Companions/Associates
- Family/Marital
- Accommodations
- Alcohol/Drugs
- Emotional/Personal
- Education/Employment
- Financial

Reentry Case Plan Developed

- Offender driven
- Offenders assigned to interventions to address needs and reduce risk
- Goals, Action Steps, High Risk Behaviors, Pro-Social Behaviors and Restorative Justice components are identified
- Transition and Release Plans are developed
- Reviewed and updated as the offender moves through the system

Services Provide By Iowa Workforce In Prison

- NCRC (National Career Readiness Certificate) skill assessment that shows employers basic skill levels in three specific areas – math, reading and locating information.
- Registration with Iowa Jobs for automated job matching/ Job referrals and interviews upon release.
- POETS work readiness classes specific to their needs concerning job searching, application process, resume/cover letter, interviewing, follow-up, and job retention (i.e. emotions and employment).

Continue

- Obtainment of Birth Certificate and Social Security Card for I-9 eligibility requirements.
- Guidance on transportation issue and referral to licensure reinstatement program .
- Register for employer tax credit and information on federal bonding program.

Continue

- Computer Classes i.e. basic computer and Microsoft Certification through New Horizons (ICIW only).
- One-on-one counseling on career goals based on criminal background.
- Promote program to employers (job development).

Support Services Provided By Education/Treatment Staff Reentry Coordinator/Counselor, and Workforce Advisor

- Life Skills
- Employment plan and placement
- Clothing for interviewing
- Reentry Resource Booklet
- Mental Health Services
- Substance Abuse/Aftercare
- Family Reunification
- Mentoring services
- Transportation
- Housing

Activity Report

	Rockwell	Mitchellville	Newton
Participants served	133	159	149
Participants released	81	68	28
Participants working within 30 days of release	58	68	14
National Career Readiness Certificate	32	48	77
Gold	6	8	13
Silver	14	24	34
Bronze	10	8	16

Jobs = a big part of the solution

According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, the single most significant factor in reducing recidivism is post-custody employment

(source, Measuring Recidivism, A Component of the Fifteen Year Report on the U.S. Sentencing Commissions' Legislative Mandate, 2003)

Opportunity!

Offenders must be prepared to reenter our communities and begin new lives with as much confidence, support, and community connectivity as possible. With job training and opportunities the value of the reentry movement in Iowa will contribute tangibly to public safety and community well being.

**IF THEY DON'T HAVE A PLAN, THEN THEY
DON'T HAVE A CHANCE!!!**

Amber,

Thank you for all your help. I just finished my first day of work today as the Head of the Maintenance Dept. for the Ramada Inn in Bettendorf.....I was grateful for all the training I received. I was able to get my job based on my resume and cover letter only. No application was ever filled out. The accountant at Ramada was already aware of the felon tax credits, but the manager who hired me wasn't. It all worked out. I really think your doing a great thing. Your a really good person.

Daniel Skalla

To whom it concern,

“.....I am currently employed with the Siouxland Community Blood Bank. I work in Hospital Services, where I am responsible for working with 37 local hospitals. Having this type of responsibility and trust given to me by an employer has shown me I am not only capable but have some self-worth in my community as productive citizen. I know that without this program and encouragement from Mrs. Tart , “I would have never applied for this job as I felt I could not do such a job of this nature nor the ability to do it.”

I am an offender and I know without hope and gaining employment so quickly after being released I would have been more likely to return back to prison

Sincerely,
Stefanie Maher

Value Of Partnership

- Meet conditions of parole
- Reduce recidivism
- Improve relationships with family
- Safer communities
- Save taxpayer dollars

Quick Facts!

- **Prisons**

Average daily cost (FY 2008)	\$85.02
Per meal	\$1.72

- **Community**

Average daily cost (FY 2008) - no treatment cost included	
Residential Facilities	\$65.94
Probation/Parole	\$3.75

Parole/Work Release Conditions

- Required to be employed within 90 days
- Pay supervision fee (\$300.00)
- Set-up victim restitution payment plan within first 30 days.
- Required to pay housing fee (averages \$460.00 per month in work release).
- Set-up payment plan to get driver's license reinstated
- Pay for own transportation.
- Pay for required classes and continuing treatment.

Not meeting conditions of a parole can result in a revocation and a return to prison.

Offender and Family

Researchers have found that general family acceptance and encouragement are related to Post Release success. In a study of recently released prisoners in New York City, members of the sample who demonstrated the greatest success in employment soon after release exhibited optimistic attitudes were “the ones that talked most about their family’s acceptance of them” (Nelson et al. 1999:10).

Studies also found that recently released prisoners who were employed within 90 days of release lead to positive outcomes concerning decreased substance use and fewer physical, mental, and emotional problems.

(Couturier 1995; Shapiro And Schwartz 2001; Sullivan et al. 2002).

Creating Safer Communities

The idea that helping offenders live law-abiding lives is in the interests of community safety is now an idea in good currency. Americans and their political leaders are no longer single-mindedly committed to toughness and are much more convinced that efforts to help released prisoners live law abiding lives are worth both the work and the money as a means to make for safer communities and at the same time it reunites families. (Travis and Visher 2005).

Barriers and Challenges

- Changing employer perception of offenders
- Changing the public perception of offenders
- Increasing the capacity in the institutions to provide employment skills and vocational training that meet the needs of employers in the community
- Increasing access to safe housing
- Engaging the community to providing support and accountability

Conclusion

If offenders are employed, if they have stable housing, if they are involved in meaningful pro-social relationships, if they are sober and drug free they can become productive members of our communities, they can be successfully discharged from corrections, they will not return to corrections, the cost of the corrections can decrease and our communities can be safer.