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# Final Report and Recommendations of the Employment Work Group

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July 10, 2009

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# Work Group Charge

- Develop implementation strategies recommended within the ESS Ex-Offender Employment final Report
  - Research and analyze additional economic self-sufficiency opportunities/strategies for successful reentry
  - Identify and recommend sustainable funding to support employment/economic self-sufficiency programming
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# ESS Ex-Offender Employment Final Report Strategies

- Significantly increase funding for and use of transitional jobs programs
  - Seek and use input from employers regarding their needs
  - Develop a real time job bank
  - Assure access to needed training resources
  - Develop a single point of entry, assessment and linkage
  - Help reentering adults manage their income
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# Process

- Reviewed the research gathered for the ESS report
  - Gathered additional research
  - Met with academics, policy experts, and program implementers
  - Formed two subcommittees to address employers and transitional jobs
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# Ex-Offenders and Barriers

- Limited education and cognitive skills
    - Failure to graduate from high school
      - Holzer – 70%
      - Bushway – 59%
      - General population – 15%
    - Literacy
      - Half are functionally illiterate
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# Ex-Offenders and Barriers

- Limited work experience
    - Pre-prison, ex-offenders had a lower level of work experience compared to similar population
    - Only 2/3 worked the month before arrest
    - Part time work is disproportionately large
    - Work history fragmented by incarceration
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## Ex-Offenders and Barriers

- Substance abuse and other physical and mental health issues
    - 70% to 80% reported drug use within six months prior to arrest
    - 1 in 6 reported that offense was motivated by money to purchase drugs
    - 51% reported using drugs or alcohol while committing offense
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## Ex-Offenders and Barriers

- Substance abuse and other physical and mental health issues
    - 21% self report some condition that impacts their ability to work, compared to 11% of the general population
    - 10% to 16% self report as mentally ill
    - 10% self report a learning disability
    - 12% self report a vision or hearing problem
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# Ex-Offenders and Barriers

- Motivation and choices
    - Holzer
      - attitude and choices are an internal barrier
      - While available jobs are low value, they do exist
      - Choice between the low value job and criminality
    - Bushway
      - Older ex-offenders are more likely to be successful
      - “a change in the fundamental orientation of the individual”
    - Motivation is the critical first step in a successful reentry effort
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# Employers and Needs

- Holzer identifies two major needs of employers and the difficulties the exoffender has in meeting them
    - The employer wants employees who add value to their business
    - The employer wants employees they can trust and will not add risk
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# Employers and Needs

- Adding value - challenges
    - Over 95% of unskilled jobs in urban areas require a high school diploma, work experience, or relevant skills
    - Employers want employees who are job ready
    - Significant job growth tends to occur in suburban areas
    - Some level of racial discrimination continues to exist
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# Employers and Needs

- Trust and risk – challenges
    - Collateral sanctions
    - Negligent hiring
    - Widespread availability of conviction information
    - Some businesses have an lower tolerance of risk in hiring the ex-offender; cash handling, security, children or the elderly, health services
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# Employers and Needs

## ■ ***Recommendations***

- Continue gathering research material on the subject of employer practices
  - Obtain a complete breakdown of Montgomery County employers, detailing their hiring needs and capacity
  - Develop a comprehensive marketing plan to recruit employers
    - Use focus groups, industry sector analysis, other survey instruments
    - Use information regarding employers who currently hire ex-offenders
    - Consider the use of the West Michigan Team Organizational Model
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# Specialized Employment Center

- The SEC will engage ex-offenders by
    - Coordinating case management and existing community resources
    - Provide comprehensive life skills and employability assessments
    - Increase employability skills
    - Increase individual sense of community support and self-esteem
    - Establish long term career plans and strategy
    - Validate results through a rigorous evaluation process
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# Specialized Employment Center

- Case Managers will coordinate activities with IEPs, track removal of barriers, and deliver case management services not otherwise provided
  - An appropriate assessment tool will be identified
  - Participants will receive assessments to identify
    - Transferable employment skills
    - Needed job seeking skills
    - Mental health, drug and alcohol, and medical treatment needs
  - If ready for employment, exoffender will be assigned to an Employment Specialist
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# Specialized Employment Center

- The Employment Specialist will
    - ❑ Establish a rapport
    - ❑ Provide/coordinate job seeking and life skills training
    - ❑ Help develop a job search strategy
    - ❑ Provide job development and placement assistance
    - ❑ Receive assistance from the Employer Liaison
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# Specialized Employment Center

- **The Employability Mentor Advisor will**
    - Work with staff to identify ex-offenders who want to participate in individual or group mentoring
    - Identify and train volunteers
    - Coordinate and monitor mentoring activities
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# Specialized Employment Center

- Contract with 10 community organizations to serve as points of contact
  - Goodwill Easter Seals will coordinate the effort and provide operational leadership
  - MCDJFS will provide in kind services and access to various training funding
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# Specialized Employment Center

- Comprehensive evaluation system
    - Identify required tracking data
    - Formulate a tracking system
    - Assess the success of individual components
    - Identify issues
    - Assess overall success of the program
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# Specialized Employment Center

- ***Recommendations***

- The Employment Work Group supports the model of the Specialized Employment Center as submitted in the Byrne Grant Application
  - In the event that the Byrne Grant is not awarded, the Specialized Employment Center should be the first and primary focus of funding efforts
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# Transitional Jobs

- The National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN) defines Transitional Jobs as
  - ...a workforce strategy designed to overcome employment obstacles by using time-limited, wage-paying jobs that combine real work, skills development, and supportive services, to transition participants successfully into the labor market.
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# Transitional Jobs

- A Transitional Jobs program typically
    - Is based on subsidized jobs
    - Lasts from three to nine months
    - Helps the participant learn the habits of work
    - Provides access to specific training and educational opportunities
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# Transitional Jobs

- Core elements include
    - Orientation and assessment
    - Job readiness and life skills classes
    - Case management and support
    - Real work experience
    - Unsubsidized job placement and retention
    - Education and training
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# Transitional Jobs

- The Employment Work Group would add the following to the list of core elements
    - Building confidence within the employer community and supporting them as they hire ex-offenders
    - Building a support network for the ex-offenders
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# Transitional Jobs

- We envision a Transitional Jobs program
    - That works closely with the prison system, initiating contacts and conducting assessments within that environment
    - Where ex-offenders would commit to a mix of paid work, as well as training and services, at a wage that would allow them to meet their other obligations, such as child support and restitution
    - That uses staff who would work with the participants to help them develop soft skills and career pathways
    - That provides incentives to encourage successful participation
    - That gives ex-offenders opportunities to interact with the community in positive ways
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# Transitional Jobs

## ■ ***Recommendations***

- Create a Transitional Jobs Incubator that would
    - provide shared administrative services for organizations creating programs.
    - be the point of contact for offenders within institutions
    - provide uniform assessments and soft skill training for participants.
    - provide case management services
    - provide a job development and retention specialist
    - provide other support, such as identifying grant opportunities.
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# Transitional Jobs

- ***Recommendations***

- Implementation

- Use existing organizations to provide services under contract to the Transitional Jobs Incubator
- Coordinate with MCDJFS to ensure that critical functions of case management and job development and retention remain connected to Montgomery County Jobs and Family Services

- Funding

- Funding would be provided by participating companies, Montgomery County Jobs and Family Services and other appropriate government agencies and private foundations.
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# Transitional Jobs

## ■ ***Recommendations***

### □ Procedure

- Interested organizations would apply to participate in the Transitional Jobs Incubator consisting of detailed proposals detailing how they would meet transitional jobs objectives
- There are two current start-up businesses in Dayton that the committee recommends as initial participants in the Transitional Jobs Incubator; Dayton Works + with founding organization East End Community Services and the Transplant Project with founder Howard Solganik

### □ Measuring Progress

- Benchmarks of success include measurements regarding retention and recidivism
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# Participant Selection and Expectations

- Number of inmates released by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections will continue at a high rate, with 1,600 and 1,800 ex-offenders returning annually
  - Insufficient resources exist to serve the entire population
  - Not all ex-offenders have similar needs, or are likely to produce similar outcomes
  - The reentry effort should carefully consider criteria for participation that would help the largest number
  - To ensure the program's success, participants should be carefully screened to guarantee that they possess the minimum qualities necessary for successful employment
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# Participant Selection and Expectations

- ***Recommendation***

- Participation should take into consideration the following criteria:
    - Nature of Offense: While no ex-offender would be automatically excluded, admission should consider if the conviction provides cause for concern in the employment arena
    - Substance Abuse/Mental Health Status: Participation should be limited to ex-offenders who demonstrate a focus on sobriety and demonstrate interest in mental health recovery
    - Motivation/Enthusiasm: Participants must exhibit a positive attitude and a willingness to change and better their thought processes and material lifestyle. They must possess an open mind, be willing to stick to their efforts and demonstrate a desire to change and succeed. Participants should be willing to listen to others, learn new methods of interaction and be accepting of positive feedback
    - Job and Life Skills Coaching: Participants should be willing to participate in job and life skills coaching before their release and during their participation. Participants who repeatedly fail to comply with the requirements of the program should be reviewed for removal
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# Funding

- Montgomery County spends an estimated 72% of its annual budget, or \$115 million, on the criminal justice system, and the State of Ohio budgeted some \$1.81 billion for corrections for fiscal year 2009
  - Despite this, no permanent, ongoing funding exists to support a sustainable, comprehensive reentry effort
  - Programs we've reviewed have overwhelmingly been local efforts frequently funded by start up grants, with the funding expiring within one to three years
  - It is difficult to see how any new funding stream of sufficient strength could be created in either Montgomery County or Ohio
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# Funding

- Much of the current interest in reentry is driven by a growing perception that we are in an era of diminishing returns when it comes to the current model of law enforcement and corrections spending
  - It is more realistic to approach funding for reentry programs as a matter of realignment of current resources, rather than finding ways to generate new ones
  - Without a stable, predictable, and dedicated funding stream, effective employment reentry programs will be difficult or impossible to build
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# Funding

- Could we refocus a small portion of the current criminal justice/corrections budget be on reentry, with the goal of reducing overall system costs?
    - Legislature would have to be willing to identify existing funding streams and redirect them to the reentry effort
    - Unlikely to do so unless they could clearly anticipate a reduction in overall costs
    - Even then, current recipients of these resources would be protective of them
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# Funding

- Cost of recidivism
    - 28,039 felons were released in 2008
    - The current rate of recidivism 38%
    - The average stay in prison is 2.04 years or approximately 744 days
    - Ohio \$67.66 per day of incarceration
    - Formula:  $28,039 \times .38 \times 744 \times \$67.66 = \$536,353,410$
  - Cost benefit of reducing recidivism
    - Assume a reduction of 5%, or a recidivism rate of 36.1%, of the overall release population.
    - Formula:  $28,039 \times .361 \times 744 \times \$67.66 = \$509,535,739$
  - Result
    - A savings of \$26,817,671 to the State of Ohio
    - 532 fewer individuals return to prison
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# Funding

## ■ ***Recommendation***

- ❑ Montgomery County work with the State of Ohio and other counties to implement a funding plan that would identify and supply the resources required to begin a comprehensive reentry employment program
  - ❑ Subsequent funding for this program be based upon the achievement of a reduction of recidivism and demonstrated cost savings
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# Questions and comments

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