POLICY STATEMENT

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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND THE TRANSITION PLAN

Connect inmates to employment, including supportive employment and employment services, before their release to the community.

Connecting each prisoner to a job in the community in advance of his or her release date is a critical step to facilitating a successful return to the community. Programming during incarceration (discussed in Policy Statement 15, Education and Vocational Training, and Policy Statement 16, Work Experience) can prepare the prisoner to take advantage of the expansion of workforce opportunities in the community, as outlined in the previous policy statement, Creation of Employment Opportunities. Many individuals will still require assistance in finding and obtaining appropriate positions, however. Corrections staff and employment services providers should seek to promote direct linkages to jobs by increasing the flow of information and resources between the institution and the community. Employers can visit a prison to learn more about potential employees, and One-Stop career centers can offer individuals their services even before they return the community. Work-release programs that allow prisoners to gain experience in the community and written information provided upon release can also promote effective transitions. The key to all of these efforts is cooperation that reaches across prison walls to maximize efficiency and opportunity.

Few inmates are connected to actual jobs—transitional or permanent—before release.

While being employed is associated with reductions in recidivism,[61] most inmates leave prison without having an actual job in place. A large three-state recidivism study, for example, found that less than half of released prisoners had a job lined up upon their return to the community.[62] Studies from other states reveal even more sobering findings. Of 400 male prison inmates from Chicago who were surveyed prior to their release, only 14 percent had a post-release job lined up at the time of their interview.[63]

Inmates would benefit from pre-release programs that enhance their job-seeking skills.

Most prisoners would benefit from vocational guidance and direct support in identifying employment opportunities matched to their skills and experience and then, aid in approaching these potential employers about jobs. Even those who have job skills and are motivated to change may lack some of the basic skills needed to secure employment. These skills, such as résumé writing, interview protocol, completing job applications, and appointment scheduling, are necessary to find and secure employment. Job skills-enhancement programs coupled with transition planning and immediate employment opportunities have consistently improved the likelihood that a recently released individual will find and maintain gainful employment.[64]

Few prisons and county jails currently provide job placement services.

State and county agencies responsible for the maintenance of prisons and jails rarely provide services that link soon-to-be released prisoners with jobs on the outside. Some wardens invite private employers to their facilities for job fairs, but there is little evidence of the success or effectiveness of these initiatives. There are a limited number of examples of institution-based programs that link inmates to post-release jobs. Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders), run by the Texas Workforce Commission, is a notable example of the promise of these types of programs. Providing job placement services to more than 16,000 parolees each year, Project RIO has found that its participants are more likely to be employed a year after release and less likely to be re-incarcerated in comparison to similar released individuals.[65] Most organizations that link former prisoners and employers do so only after release.

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61 Christopher Uggen and Jeremy Staff, "Work as a Turning Point for Criminal Offenders," in Jesse L. Krienert and Mark S. Fleisher (eds.), *Crime & Employment: Critical Issues in Crime Reduction for Corrections* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004); Shawn Bushway and Peter Reuter, "Labor Markets and Crime," in Joan Petersilia and James Q. Wilson (eds.), *Crime: Public Policies for Crime Control*, 2nd ed. (Oakland, CA: ICS Press, 2000).

62 Steven Steurer, Linda Smith, and Alice Tracy, *Three-State Recidivism Study* (Lanham, MD: Correctional Educational Association, 2001).

63 Christy Visher, Nancy G. LaVigne, and Jill Farrell, *Illinois Prisoners' Reflections on Returning Home* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2003).

64 Shawn Bushway, "Employment Dimensions of Re-Entry" (paper presented at The Urban Institute's Re-Entry Roundtable, Washington, DC, May 2003).

65 R. Menon et al., *An Evaluation of Project RIO Outcomes: An Evaluative Report* (College Station: Texas A&M University Public Policy Resources Laboratory, 1992); D. C. McDonald et al., *Transition Services and Supervision for Released Prisoners: Implications of Research Findings for Program Development* (draft report prepared for the US Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice; Cambridge: Abt Associates, Inc., 1995).

There are relatively few community-based organizations that specialize in linking former prisoners to work; they are mostly locally based, and cannot begin to accommodate the national demand for services.

Such job placement programs show promise for improving outcomes for people returning from prison and jail, but exist only in a handful of communities.[66] The Safer Foundation, for example, is a Chicago-based organization that provides job training and placement, as well as transitional housing and other supportive services for released individuals. They place nearly 1,500 individuals each year, and report significantly lower recidivism findings for their clients than nonparticipants.[67] An evaluation of Safer found that 29 percent of clients who completed the program (in 1996) committed a new crime in the first 180 days of release, as compared to the 40 percent recidivism rate statewide that year.[68] The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) in New York City is another example of a large-scale job placement program, which serves an average of 1,800 clients per year (nonviolent felony parolees, individuals on work release, probationers).[69] CEO clients have an average annual placement rate of over 60 percent and average earnings nearly 50 percent above minimum wage.[70,71] The CEO model consists first of preparing the person through job readiness training and an in-depth assessment with a job counselor, then providing them with paid transitional employment to establish their self-sufficiency and a sense of accomplishment. During their transitional employment, participants receive job development training based on the feedback from their temporary supervisors. Then, the individual is placed in a permanent job placement and, for the next twelve months, receives support from a counselor. After the one-year period has passed, CEO will continue to provide support and training as is necessary.[72]

recommendations

A Initiate job searches before people in prison or jail are released using community-based workforce development resources.

As an inmate nears the date of his or her release, the transition planner should be spearheading a comprehensive job-search effort on his or her behalf. Workforce and employment services providers from outside the walls should be engaged in this job search. Trained corrections staff should also be able to help inmates take advantage of community-based resources and develop basic job searching skills through the use of technology.

66 For more information on these and other programs that provide job training and placement services to released individuals, see Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign, *Outside the Walls: A National Snapshot of Community-Based Prisoner Reentry Programs* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2003).

67 Safer Foundation, available online at www.safer-fnd.org.

68 Illinois Department of Corrections, "Departmental Data" (Springfield, IL: Department of Corrections, 1999), available online at www.idoc.state.il.us/subsections/reports/fact_sheets/FY1999.pdf.

69 Available online at www.ceoworks.org/about.htm.

70 Mindy Tarlow, Executive Director of CEO, interview with editor, February 2004.

71 Peter Finn, *Successful Job Placement for Ex-Offenders: the Center for Employment Opportunities*, National Institute of Justice, Program Focus (Washington, DC: 1998), NCJ 168102.

72 Available online at www.ceoworks.org/ceo_model.htm.

EXAMPLE: Educational and Vocational Programs, Orange County Jail and Mid-Florida Technical School (FL)

The Orange County jail has two prerelease job assistance programs. The first program, staffed by four full-time corrections employees, helps inmates search for work. The second program, staffed by two job developers from Mid-Florida Technical School, helps inmates enrolled in Phoenix vocational courses find employment and addresses their medical, housing, and transportation needs.

One-Stops provide one source of employment assistance for individuals preparing to leave correctional facilities. Prisoners are eligible for the basic job-listing and search services available through One-Stops under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which is designed to provide "universal" service to all job seekers and employers. Many, if not most, prisoners meet the criteria for intensive services provided by the One-Stops, which include assessments, job counseling, and other assistance. Access to skills training programs offered in the community may also be available to some inmates under WIA.

Due to many programmatic limitations or reporting and evaluation disincentives, people in prisons or jails may not receive the type or level of services envisioned under many of the programs and services available through One-Stop career centers. Rather, many of these programs and services tend to go to incumbent and dislocated workers in the community who have some experience in the local job market and who can conduct self-directed job searches more easily than people who are incarcerated. People who are in prison or jail need more assistance and access to be able to truly benefit from the advantages of a One-Stop.

EXAMPLE: Offender Reentry Program, Suffolk County House of Correction (MA)

The Offender Reentry Program (ORP), available to selected inmates at the Suffolk County (MA) House of Correction, demonstrates that, with enhanced support, One-Stop centers can effectively serve released individuals. Funded by the US Department of Education, ORP provides individuals intensive support services during and after release. Job counselors under contract from The Workplace, a One-Stop career center in Boston, provide employment readiness classes both at a halfway house and at the Workplace's downtown office, giving students the opportunity to become familiar with center resources. Halfway house residents also participate in weekly job-support meetings at the One-Stop for 12 weeks or until they find work.

States should also facilitate access to One-Stops for people in prison by developing satellite One-Stops in correctional institutions. When financial constraints prevent the placement of actual, staffed One-Stops in the institutions, corrections administrators should consider installing "virtual" One-Stops in the institution. The virtual One-Stop would consist of computer terminals with network links to the local One-Stop's

THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT AND ONE-STOP CENTERS

What is the Workforce Investment Act?

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) replaced the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) as the nation's guiding federal legislation on the training, retraining, and employment of youth, adults, and dislocated workers.

What is a One-Stop?

One-Stop career centers are either physical or virtual resources for employers and job seekers to find the assistance needed to realize positive and appropriate employment. WIA requires that local workforce investment areas establish at least one physical One-Stop to serve employers and job seekers. Local workforce boards may establish more than one physical One-Stop, and may also create virtual One-Stops at partner agencies, in community-based organizations, or in other facilities, such as prisons or churches.

website and job listings. Inmates could connect with One-Stop staff and the One-Stop job databases using the computer.

Prison staff members also need to know about general community resources that will be available to help people transition back to their community upon release from correctional institutions. Even apart from virtual One-Stops, the Internet can facilitate comprehensive job searches from within the correctional institution. State employment agencies and private employment services routinely post current job listings online, as do individual employers and media outlets such as local newspapers. A computer with an Internet connection will allow any inmate access to these listings, which can be sorted by region. While security is always a concern within correctional institutions, monitoring and blocking software is readily available that can be used to limit an inmate's ability to use the computer for unintended purposes. Software currently used in some libraries, for example, restricts access so that the computer user can visit only websites that are on a preset list.

Finally, inmates need assistance while incarcerated with the writing of résumés and the creation of work portfolios for use in the job search and interviewing process, and for the benefit of job coaches and employment counselors at One-Stops and community-based organizations.

EXAMPLE: Corrections Clearing House, Employment Security Department (WA)

The Washington State Corrections Clearing House (CCH), a branch of the Employment Security Department, works with corrections officials to provide services to enable inmates to secure employment, including educational courses, vocational training programs, offsite community service opportunities for minimum security inmates, and both prerelease and post-release job-search assistance. At five prisons, CCH instructors register their students with the Employment Security Department, enabling them to access the department's JobNet computerized job databank so that they can get job leads while still in prison. In job preparation programs, students are encouraged to use JobNet as a resource and place calls to the job leads that they find using the database.

B Encourage employers to visit the correctional facility and meet with prospective employees before they are released.

Bringing employers to the correctional facility enables prisoners to establish connections with these employers prior to release and to build valuable professional networking skills. In addition, seeing employers in the institution encourages inmates to begin job searching prior to release. To these ends, corrections administrators should provide job fairs, private sector joint ventures, guest speakers, or mock interview sessions, or other programs that will engage employers.

EXAMPLE: Inmate Transition Branch, Federal Bureau of Prisons

The Federal Bureau of Prisons' Inmate Transition Branch assists in the implementation of job fairs and mock job fairs in federal prisons and (by request) in state prisons or jails. Its precursor, the Inmate Placement Program Branch, assisted with over 350 job fairs in 100 federal prisons. The Branch also distributes instructional publications such as a *Mock Job Fair Handbook* to corrections staff nationwide.

The type of facility and its location may make it particularly difficult for an employer to come to the institution. For example, people incarcerated in county jails are usually situated geographically close to where they will be released. It may be easier for employers and One-Stop staff to partner with county jails than it is to partner with state prisons, which may be a significant distance from the home communities of inmates and relevant potential employers.

State prisons are often far from the communities to which prisoners will return, which exacerbates the problems a person in prison faces when searching for a job. Corrections administrators should consider transferring prisoners to community-based facilities such as jails as they are nearing their release dates, in order to facilitate job searches as well as to allow prisoners to make other connections in the community. (See Policy Statement 25, Development of Supervision Strategy, for more on transferring state prisoners to local facilities prior to release.)

c | Engage community members and community-based services to act as intermediaries between employers and job-seeking individuals.

If corrections officials have not already linked individuals with community- or faith-based organizations for the purpose of assistance with finding or maintaining employment, they should do so in the critical prerelease period. This engagement should begin as early as possible, however, to allow time for the process of connection or reconnection between the intermediary and the individual. (See Policy Statement 21, Creation of Employment Opportunities, for more on engaging intermediaries to facilitate connections with potential employers of released individuals.)

EXAMPLE: Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Project, Conquest Offender Reintegration Ministries (DC)

Conquest Offender Reintegration Ministries (CORM) matches mentors with individuals while they are still incarcerated to work together to construct a transition plan. Once an individual is released, the CORM mentor will meet several times with that individual to help him or her to find housing, clothing, and employment.

EXAMPLE: Welfare to Work Non-custodial Parent Program, Pacific Mountain Workforce (WA)

Program participants receive a host of employment support services from employment readiness programs to driver's license renewal fees. Services are provided in the jail, in work-release facilities and in the community. During incarceration, inmates are interviewed and assessed for eligibility, and eligible individuals are enrolled. Those enrolled then receive pre-employment training including a job search portfolio, interest inventories and the development of career goals.

D | Promote use of work-release programs as a transition between work inside a correctional facility and work after release into the community.

Although work-release programs may be beneficial at any time during a person's period of incarceration, such programs should at least be employed for individuals in the final six to twenty-four months of their prison or jail term. (See Policy Statement 16, Work Experience, for a discussion on the merits of work-release programming prior to the transitional phase.) In addition to providing actual, community-based experience for people in prison just before they re-enter the community, work-release programs provide an opportunity to educate local employers about the benefits and risks of employing inmates, paving the way for greater understanding and collaboration between the institution and the private sector.

Integrating released individuals into the workplace prior to their release will also help with the development of certain "soft skills" needed to maintain employment. For example, in the controlled environment of work release, prisoners can learn the difference between appropriate interpersonal skills in prison versus those in the community and workplace. Inmates will get to see firsthand the type of work ethic needed in the workforce to avoid re-incarceration in the future. Moreover, the "temporary" placement during work release may become a foundation for permanent placement upon release.

EXAMPLE: Adult Transition Centers, Safer Foundation (IL)
The Safer Foundation administers two minimum security male residential Adult Transition Centers (ATCs) for the Department of Corrections. ATC residents remain Illinois inmates but are required to participate for a minimum of 35 hours per week in outside employment, education, life skills, and/or community service, while also assuming responsibility for daily in-house assignments. To ensure that participants are prepared for and find jobs, the Safer Foundation devotes case managers, job developers, basic skills programmers, and other supportive services staff to each ATC. Participants are transferred to Safer ATCs with a maximum of two years remaining in their sentences. They stay for an average of 10-11 months, and seldom for less than five months.

Because work-release participants will be in the community, however, corrections officials must be especially careful about selecting inmates to participate in such programs. Accordingly, violent or high-risk individuals should not be eligible for work-release programs. Further, work release should be reserved for those inmates who show an interest in improving their skills or securing stable and productive employment upon release. Indicators of eligible participants may include consistent participation, initiative, and advancement in skill-training courses, academic courses, or job-search and employability opportunities. In this way, corrections officials can use work release as an incentive or reward for good behavior.

The benefits that work release can provide are particularly important for those individuals whose release date is subject to the discretion of a releasing authority. Parole boards do not use the ability to find employment as criteria for release, but parole decisions are made on the basis of the

risk classification, the existence of a suitable home, and the assumption that the parolee will be working in one to two weeks. Work release greatly increases the chances of the inmate being able to meet this assumption.

On the other hand, some corrections officials may want work-release programs to target inmates who are approaching the end of their sentences and will be released to limited or no supervision. Because work release offers prisoners restricted, supervised involvement in the community prior to their release, it provides a good bridge between the completely monitored life of incarceration and the relatively unsupervised (or, for those with no probation or parole after release, completely unsupervised) life of the community.

In addition to deciding who is eligible for work release, corrections officials should set clear guidelines for work-release projects. For instance, work-release inmates should not be allowed to attend off-site or overnight work functions. Moreover, inmates who engage in inappropriate or uncooperative behavior, whether or not it relates to their work-release assignment, should be removed from the work release program.

For employers, there are many benefits to supporting work release programs: the department of corrections absorbs most of the risk, provides transportation, and provides low-wage workers in employment areas where there is a shortage of workers. Ideally, employers will extend full-time positions to work release employees upon their release.

EXAMPLE: Work-Release Correctional Facilities, Pioneer Human Services (WA)

Pioneer Human Services, an entrepreneurial nonprofit, operates several work-release facilities that provide residents with an integrated program of treatment, job training, support services and work at a Pioneer business. Probation violators and individuals in the last three to six months of their sentences are eligible. Pioneer provides comprehensive work, housing, counseling, and job-site services, including health insurance, to encourage and support independent living. When clients leave the work-release program, they can continue working with Pioneer.

When prisons are far from the communities to which released individuals will return, it can be very difficult for an inmate to establish relationships with potential future employers. Responding to this concern, some jurisdictions have created work release programs that enable prisoners to move closer to their home communities as they near their release date.

EXAMPLE: Jail Transition Program, Virginia Department of Corrections

The Jail Transition Program focuses on moving individuals from prisons to local jails and back into their communities. Selected individuals transfer to their local jails and receive pre-release transition services 90 days before and 45 days after release. Some participants begin work release while attending workshops. Serious offenders not eligible for work release attend additional classroom programs. Upon release, participants have had the benefit of intensive workshops, connections with community resources, focused career/life goals, and job search skills, and will benefit from continued support from the program.

Another way to provide people with skills as well as community-based experience during their incarceration is work release for community

service work. As with prison-based volunteer work, work-release community service will give the inmate the opportunity to maintain and, ideally, to improve his or her skills. Participating in community service projects also helps the corrections system politically because the community can actually see inmates "giving back" and providing restitution to the community. Some programs, such as the ones that have inmates work to clear land and then distribute the wood as firewood to the community, actually combine work release with community service.

EXAMPLE: Pre-Release Program, The Kintock Group (NJ)
The residential Pre-Release Program, operated by the nonprofit Kintock Group for the State of New Jersey, helps individuals within 18 months of parole transition from incarceration to employment and community life. In addition to job readiness and other educational programs, the Kintock Group requires that its participants perform community service before they can obtain overnight furloughs.

E Encourage community networks to support prisoners who participate in work release programs.

The success of work-release programs may hinge on the community's acceptance and support for its goals and participants. Prison staff should also encourage public acceptance of work-release programs. Officials can emphasize the transitional benefits of work release, making clear that inmates who are participating in work-release programs are rightly preparing to re-enter the community. Another way to increase community support of work-release programs is to provide a liaison between the program and the public. Work-release centers should (and often do) have staff or volunteers who are able to address questions or concerns from the community. The community liaison could also report regularly to citizens in the community who fund work-release programs, to advise donors that the program is active and that prisoners are working effectively.

Mentors, faith-based groups, and other community groups can create community networks to provide support for inmates participating in work release. Because the inmates are the ultimate responsibility of the department of corrections, the department should ensure that mentors and community groups provide services that meet employer and corrections expectations. Volunteers need to be trained, monitored, and evaluated to ensure compliance with goals and rules of the program, as well to avoid liability. By establishing close ties with community or faith-based organizations and the business community, the department of corrections maximizes the chance of success for work-release program participants and creates a safety net if the work-release assignment is not a successful match.

EXAMPLE: Work-Release Correctional Facilities, Pioneer Human Services (WA)
Pioneer Human Services partners with community-based organizations, private-sector businesses, and local community colleges for its comprehensive work release program. The partners provide a range of support, educational, and employment opportunities for the program participants.

F | Provide individuals, upon their release from prison or jail, with written information about their prospective employers or community employment service providers and official documentation of their skills and experience, including widely accepted credentials and/or letters of recommendation.

It is critical that individuals be provided with the resources and support necessary to obtain or maintain employment as they leave custody and return to the community. If staff and community partners have been unable to connect the individual with a job prior to his or her release, he or she should have a series of interviews arranged for the first days back in the community. If nothing else, the individual should have an appointment with a job specialist at the nearest One-Stop career center in his or her home community.

Upon release every inmate should also have a pocket-card with one or more of the following listed, as appropriate:

- The name, address, and phone number of his or her new employer. The start date and time should also be listed, along with the name of the person to whom he or she should report on the first day. A list of documents needed for the first day of work should also be included.
- The names, addresses, and phone numbers pertaining to any interviews scheduled for him or her. The dates and times should be listed, as well as a list of documents needed for the interviews.
- The address and phone number of the One-Stop career center closest to the address where the released individual will be living upon his or her return to the community.

Providing people who are leaving correctional facilities with even more specific job documentation and information is particularly helpful. In addition to information about the local One-Stop, individuals should be provided a list of information on any and all employment resources available in the community to which they will be returning.

People re-entering the community workforce should also receive something in writing about any credentials they have earned or progress they have made during their incarceration. Credentials should, where possible, be "portable," so that a trades-based or academic certification from the prison or jail is meaningful to employers in the community. Corrections officials will need to partner with community-based unions, community colleges, or trade schools to ensure that any certification or degrees awarded are accepted by schools and employers outside the correctional facility.

At a minimum, individuals should receive a letter from the staff that highlights the work skills they have demonstrated or acquired during incarceration. This should be included in the release packet, and can go a long way toward helping the inmate in the search for work. The letter should act essentially as a letter of recommendation, indicating what activities the individual participated in while incarcerated and what they can offer an employer.

EXAMPLE: Corrections Organized for Re-entry, Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections

Upon release, individuals who are participating in the federally-funded Corrections Organized for Re-entry (CORe) program receive a portfolio that includes the following documents: (1) Résumé; (2) Job certificates received during incarcerations; (3) Community resources directory for their region; (4) A discharge synopsis that includes information on their current employment status and any pertinent employment related appointments and programs; (5) OSHA card; and (6) educational grant information (where applicable).

Inmates who have expressed interest in faith-based programming should also be provided with a reference card that includes the phone number of a faith-based organization or community-based organization that will be able to provide emergency assistance, such as counseling, a place to sleep, or a referral to a clinic or other health provider.