



Transitional Jobs for Ex-Offenders

By Amanda Elk Szekely

An estimated 650,000 people are released from incarceration every year in the United States.¹ Whether or not these ex-offenders find employment has a significant, measurable impact on whether they commit another crime.² However, many ex-offenders face significant barriers to finding gainful employment after they are released from prison. Some have few skills and limited employment experience, and many employers are reluctant to hire people with a criminal record. Ex-offenders with drug convictions face an additional impediment to being able to support themselves and their families. Since the passage of the 1996 welfare reform law, ex-offenders with drug convictions are barred from receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or food stamps.³

Because of these challenges, ex-offenders can benefit from transitional jobs programs, which offer short-term, publicly-subsidized employment as well as support services and job placement assistance. While considerably more expensive than employment programs for more job-ready individuals, transitional jobs have been shown effective with hard-to-employ populations. Transitional jobs programs may be particularly effective with ex-offenders as they provide stable employment during a risky transition period and allow ex-offenders to build a professional resume and references that will be useful when they seek unsubsidized employment.⁴

Transitional jobs programs typically have the following characteristics:

- **Transitional jobs programs are typically administered by public or nonprofit organizations.** In some cases, workforce development organizations, such as Goodwill Industries, operate their own businesses that employ hard-to-serve individuals. In other cases, participants receive outside job placements, often supporting government or non-profit projects that add value to the community. When participants are placed in for-profit businesses, the jobs program often

requires that the private employer contribute to workers' wages and hire participants who successfully complete the program.⁵

- **Unlike unpaid workfare programs, workers in transitional jobs programs earn a regular paycheck**, often between \$5.15 and \$8 an hour. As low-income wage earners, program participants can potentially receive additional income through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other income supplements.⁶
- **Programs are time-limited and often offer between three and 12 months of paid work experience.** In addition to gaining work experience, participants generally receive a variety of support services, including job training, assistance with obtaining long-term unsubsidized employment, and long-term job retention services, such as case management and mentoring.⁷
- **Transitional jobs programs that serve ex-offenders may draw upon a range of federal funding sources**, including TANF, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grants, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Program. Programs may also receive foundation funding and income from self-supporting businesses. For more information about federal funding streams that support transitional jobs for ex-offenders and other populations, see: *Financing Transitional Jobs Programs: A Strategic Guide to Federal Funding Programs*, The Finance Project, June 2004.

This *Resources for Welfare Decisions* provides several examples of transitional jobs programs for ex-offenders and sources for further information. For additional information and updated materials, see The Finance Project's web pages on *Serving TANF Recipients with Criminal Records* at <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/win/hard-crimrecords.asp> and *Workforce Development* at <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/workforce/default.asp>.

State and Local Initiatives

New York, NY: Center for Employment Services. Created by the Vera Institute of Justice in the late 1970s, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) is a New York City non-profit organization serving nearly 1,800 ex-offenders annually. Most are from New York State's boot camp program, with the average enrollee scoring below the seventh-grade level in reading and math. CEO accepts only nonviolent offenders (95 percent have drug-related offenses). CEO offers a variety of employment services to ex-offenders including The Neighborhood Work Project (NWP), a transitional employment program. NWP offers immediate short-term paid employment opportunities through maintenance and repair services to government facilities. Participants are paid the minimum wage and receive checks daily within one week of their release. Through the program's relationship with the State Division of Parole, CEO has contracts with other state agencies for janitorial services and painting services. Contact Mindy Tarlow, Executive Director, CEO at 212.422.4850 for more information or see <http://www.ceoworks.org>.

Seattle, WA: Pioneer Human Services.

Pioneer, a human services organization in Seattle, offers transitional employment and training opportunities to high-risk populations, particularly ex-offenders and former substance abusers. PHS uses a social enterprise model, successfully integrating the operation of self-supporting businesses with the provision of an array of client services. These businesses include a retail food service, a construction company, a distribution company, a hotel and two manufacturing plants. A major study of Pioneer funded by the Ford Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation concluded that 6.5 percent of Pioneer trainees had been reincarcerated two years after leaving work release, compared to 15.4 percent of a comparison group graduating from other work-release programs. The study also found that the Pioneer group earned more money and worked more hours than the comparison group. Contact Larry Fehr, Senior Vice President, PHS at 206.766.7023 or see <http://www.pioneerhumanserv.com>.

Baltimore, MD: Project Bridge. In 2002, the National League of Cities (NLC) competitively selected ten cities to participate in a 24-month technical assistance project to establish transitional jobs programs for hard-to-employ individuals. The city of Baltimore received assistance from NLC to develop a program that targets both male and female offenders leaving Maryland-operated prisons for return to Baltimore. In October 2003, a public/private consortium in Baltimore selected Project Bridge, a collaboration of Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Associated Catholic Charities, STRIVE-Baltimore and the Second Chance Project, to implement the program. The program now offers pre-release employment and transitional services planning, subsidized transitional employment services starting within

72 hours of release, support services (especially transitional housing) and competitive unsubsidized job placement with 18 months of post-placement retention services. The program is funded by public and private entities, including the Baltimore Police Department, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Open Society Institute. For more information, contact Karen Pearson at 410.837.1800, ext. 146 or kpearson@goodwillches.org or see www.goodwillches.org.

San Francisco, CA: Goodwill Industries.

Goodwill Industries International is a network of 207 community-based, autonomous member organizations that serve people with workplace disadvantages and disabilities by providing job training and employment services, as well as job opportunities and post-employment support. Goodwill Industries of San Francisco, San Mateo, and Marin Counties offers wage-based transitional employment services to selected individuals who experience barriers to employment, including ex-offenders. Transitional employees work to sustain Goodwill's retail thrift store business as dock workers, donation site attendants, donation sorters and pricers, and retail store associates. Transitional employment is funded completely by Goodwill's retail profits. In addition to engaging in paid work, participants receive vocational counseling, case management, pre-vocational skills training, access to vocational skills training, placement assistance, and post-placement retention services. In 2001, Goodwill Industries of San Francisco, San Mateo, and Marin Counties employed 171 Transitional Employees. For more information, see: <http://www.sfgoodwill.org/channel2.htm?page=programs&mode=transemployment>.

Print and Electronic Resources

Brown, David et al. *Barriers and Promising Practices to Workforce and Youth Development for Young Offenders*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, April 2002. Available at: <http://www.aecf.org/publications/pdfs/workforce.exec.summ.pdf>.

Brown, Rebecca. *Helping Low-Income Mothers with Criminal Records Achieve Self-Sufficiency*. Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, 2002. Available at: <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/lowincomemothersissuenote.htm>.

Buck, Maria L. *Getting Back to Work: Employment Programs for Ex-Offenders*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures, Fall 2000. Available at: http://ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/94_publication.pdf.

Center for Law and Social Policy. *Transitional Jobs: Real Jobs, Real Wages, Real Success*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, March 2003. Available at: http://www.clasp.org/Pubs/DMS/Documents/1048791611.02/TJ_Basic.pdf.

Haberken, Rachel. *Helping Parents with Criminal Records to Find Employment and Achieve Self-Sufficiency*. Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, March 2003. Available at: <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/helpingparentswithcriminalrecordsIN.htm>.

Hirsch, Amy et al. *Every Door Closed: Barriers Facing Parents with Criminal Records*. Washington, D.C: Center for Law and Social Policy and Community Legal Services, Inc., September 2002. Available at: http://www.clasp.org/Pubs/DMS/Documents/1022677412.0/doc_Every_Door_Closed.pdf.

Kass, David. *Financing Transitional Jobs Programs: A Strategic Guide to Federal Funding Programs*, The Finance Project, June 2004. Available at: <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/transitionaljobs.pdf>.

Kim, Anne. *Transitional Jobs: A Bridge to Employment for Hard-to-Serve Welfare Recipients*. Washington, D.C: Progressive Policy Institute, 2001. Available at: <http://www.ndol.org/documents/TransitionalJobs.pdf>.

Kramer, Fredrica. *The Hard-to-Serve: Understanding the Population and Strategies to Serve Them*. Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, 1998. Available at: <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/hardto.htm>.

Rubinstein, Gwen. *Getting to Work: How TANF Can Support Ex-Offender Parents in the Transition to Self-Sufficiency*. New York, NY: Legal Action Center, April 2001.

Sachs, Heidi. *Support Services for Incarcerated and Released Non-Custodial Parents*. Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, 2000. Available at: <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/supportservicesforincarceratedandreleasednoncustodialparents.pdf>.

www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/heidijune2.htm.

Solomon, Amy et al. *Outside the Walls: National Snapshot of Community-Based Prisoner Reentry Programs*. Washington, D.C., Urban Institute, January 2004. Available at: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410911_OTWResourceGuide.pdf.

Travis, Jeremy, Amy L. Solomon and Michelle Waul. *From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry*. Washington, D.C: Urban Institute, June 2001. Available at: http://www.urban.org/pdfs/from_prison_to_home.pdf.

Wally, Margy. *Transitional Jobs: A Next Step in Welfare to Work Policy*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, May 2002. Available at: <http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/es/urban/publications/wallertransjobsexsum.htm>.

Welfare to Work Partnership. *Individuals with Criminal Histories: A Potential Untapped Resource*. Washington, D.C.: Welfare to Work Partnership, The Legal Action Center and the Urban Institute, March 2000. Available at: <http://www.welfaretowork.org/publications/smart%20solutions/Individuals%20with%20Criminal%20Histories.pdf>.

Resource Contacts

National Institute of Corrections, Office of Correctional Job Training and Placement (OCJTP): <http://www.nicic.org/AboutNIC/DivDetails.aspx?DivID=8>.

National H.I.R.E. (Helping Individuals with Criminal Records Reenter Through Employment), Network of the Legal Action Center: <http://www.hirenetwork.org>.

Transitional Jobs Network: <http://www.transitionaljobs.net>.

Public/Private Ventures, Workforce Development Initiatives: http://ppv.org/ppv/workforce_development/workforce_development.asp.

Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center: <http://www.urban.org/content/PolicyCenters/Justice/Overview.htm>.

Vera Institute of Justice: <http://www.vera.org>.

End Notes

¹ U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/corr2.htm>.

² Buck, Maria L. *Getting Back to Work: Employment Programs for Ex-Offenders*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures, Fall 2000. Available at: http://ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/94_publication.pdf.

³ Kass, David. *Financing Transitional Jobs Programs: A Strategic Guide to Federal Funding Programs*, The Finance Project, June 2004. Available at: <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/transitionaljobs.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Wally, Margy. *Transitional Jobs: A Next Step in Welfare to Work Policy*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, May 2002. Available at: <http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/es/urban/publications/wallertransjobsexsum.htm>.

⁶ Center for Law and Social Policy. *Transitional Jobs: Real Jobs, Real Wages, Real Success*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, March 2003. Available at: http://www.clasp.org/Pubs/DMS/Documents/1048791611.02/TJ_Basic.pdf.

⁷ Ibid.

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