



The Partnership

Quarterly Newsletter – Summer '09

National Offender Workforce Development Partnership

The mission of the partnership is to facilitate a transitional approach to apprenticeships and employment strategies for ex-offenders. The ultimate goal of the partnership is to enhance reentry success through increased opportunities for career-oriented employment of ex-offenders.

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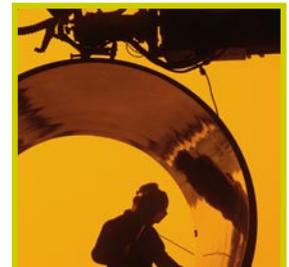
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S DISABILITY PROGRAM NAVIGATORS (DPN's) ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE EMPLOYMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS WITH DISABILITIES

Under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) directed funds to improve workforce services for people with disabilities. For this purpose, the DOL and Social Security Administration established a new position, the Disability Program Navigator (DPN), within DOL's One-Stop Career Centers. The DPN guides One-Stop Career Center staff in helping people with disabilities access and navigate the complex provisions of programs that impact their ability to gain and retain employment. The DPN Initiative was implemented in 2003 to eliminate barriers in the One-Stop Career Center system, including physical, programmatic, and communication access, and promote meaningful and effective participation of jobseekers with disabilities in the workforce investment system.

The DPNs are serving as vehicles to connect ex-offenders and agencies/organizations serving them with the One-Stop Career Center system and expanding the capacity of the One-Stop Career Centers to serve ex-offenders. There are many ways in which the DPNs are establishing and maintaining connections and partnerships at the state and local community levels to bring these two resources together, including:

- Sharing resources and information;
- Developing and providing training to educate One-Stop Career Center staff, partners, and employers on addressing the employment needs of ex-offenders with disabilities;
- Making mutual referrals;
- Participating in joint meetings/committees/work groups that address issues and promote the employment of ex-offenders with disabilities via the workforce investment system.



- Conducting outreach and marketing of One-Stop Career Center services to the ex-offender population and agencies/organizations serving them;
- Facilitating the formation of integrated service teams in the One-Stop Career Centers to blend and braid resources around the individual customer's (ex-offenders with disabilities) employment-related needs.

DPN PROMISING PRACTICES in VERMONT AND LOUISIANA

Vermont

In Vermont, a unique relationship has been established between the Department of Labor and Department of Corrections, specifically the School to Work project, which is creating "ready to work" type classrooms through a pilot project. The Department of Corrections has one of the largest caseloads of any other department within the state. Ninety percent of individuals released from correctional facilities have some type of disability. The DPNs in Vermont are going into the facilities and working with the curriculum. A DPN in the Johnsbury area worked with 52 individuals, all of whom are now employed. The DPN takes employers into the facilities and makes employment connections before the individuals are released. DPNs bring the vocational coordination piece to this initiative.

The DPN Project obtained a grant between the Vermont Department of Labor and the Vermont Department of Corrections in January 2007. The focus of the grant, called "School to Work Project," was to have DPNs work both within the correctional facilities and outside with the Vermont Community High Schools. The Community High Schools worked with offenders on probation, parole, etc. The DPNs worked with the students and assisted in preparing resumes, portfolios, and interviews with local employers. The classroom work was organized under a Correction Curriculum and included mock interviews, instructional material and discussions on how to handle employment barriers. **The grant had a goal of placing 50% of the 96 ex-offenders into employment upon their release. The grant ran from January to June 2007. The final results were significant. The Department of Labor, through the work of the DPNs, was able to find jobs for 96% of the ex-offenders released from prison.**

Vermont works closely with the Community High School of Vermont to provide youth in the correctional system with a basic education and preparation for the transition to a productive life in the community. At the Caledonia Community Work Camp in St. Johnsbury, the DPN is an important resource in the school's Transitions course to help students with disabilities to make career choices, plan for future employment, and connect with One-Stop Career Center and other resources in the areas where students will reside upon their release. The DPNs help students create resumes, learn how to seek employment, learn how to conduct themselves in job interviews, and develop positive work attitudes.

The Vermont Department of Labor is for final funding approval from the Department of Correction for a new initiative. The new grant will provide services to female offenders and will follow the relocation of female offenders to St. Albans, Vermont that is scheduled to take place in January 2009. The new grant has the following goals: provide cross-departmental staff training in such areas as Women in the Workplace (gender responsiveness), Career Decision Facilitation, the effects of trauma, Bridges Out of Poverty, and disabilities awareness. Agencies/organizations to participate in this project, include the Department of Corrections, Community High School of Vermont, Vocational Rehabilitation, Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, Vermont Department of Labor, and Vermont Works for Women, and etc. In addition, the grant will provide in-depth skill assessment, disabilities analysis, and interest inventories to female offenders to identify areas for occupational skill training at NWSCF or at external training locations. It also requires increased mentoring service to female offenders over the life of the grant. Another important goal is to provide transitional employment opportunities by enrolling in Workforce Investment Act services post-incarceration to access work experience, on-the-job training, and/or supportive services and align with the state's TANF system especially as transitional employment satisfies the work requirement of the state's Reach-Up Program. The DPNs will be playing a major role in this new grant, "Meeting Women Where They Are" to begin in February 2009, with DPNs providing on-site expertise.

Contact: Jim Dorsey, Vermont DPN Plead, (802) 786-8842; Jim.Dorsey@state.vt.us

LOUISIANA

In 2006 the Human Rights Watch organization listed Louisiana as having the highest incarceration rates in the country. With more than 797 per 100,000 people in the state incarcerated, Louisiana soars above all other states in the U.S. at the rate in which citizens are imprisoned. Some statistics say as many of 95% of these individuals will return to society.

Statistics like this make it a necessary for the DPNs to help ex-offenders can become successfully reintegrate back into society. The DPN Initiative is working to provide both pre and post release services for Louisiana's ex-offenders. The DPNs participate in Job and Community Resource fairs in the penitentiaries throughout the state so that before they return home, offenders are aware of the services that the Career Solution Centers provide. DPNs also educate employers and ex-offenders about tax credits and the Federal bonding program.

The DPNs encourage ex-offenders to visit the Career Solution Centers as soon as possible after release. They train One-Stop Career Center staff to assist ex-offenders prepare resumes, find jobs, and direct them to any other services they may need. The DPNs also work with several community organizations such as Odyssey House of New Orleans and the Step Out Interagency Collaboration to facilitate the blending and braiding of resources to leverage funding for ex.-offenders.

In New Orleans the DPNs also assisted with the 2008 Expungement & Services Fair. Entitled "The True Road to Public Safety," this event provided free legal services to help ex-offenders expunge their records so that they may have a better chance at finding and maintaining employment. Close to 200 people took advantage of this opportunity and the DPNs are currently exploring funding this

program other areas of the state. In October, 2008, the DPNs held their Third Annual Disability Employment Awareness Symposium in Lafayette, Louisiana. Nearly 40% of the participants were from Department of Corrections.

Contact: Christi Hunter, Louisiana DPN Lead, 225-342-7686; chunter@dol.state.la.us

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PARTNERS WITH KANSAS DOC “IN-REACH” OUT TO INCARCERATED FATHERS

The Kansas Child Support Enforcement (CSE) agency and the Department of Corrections (DOC) teamed up in February 2008 to assist incarcerated parents with their child support matters. In just 6 months, both partners are seeing many positive results.

The El Dorado Correctional Facility, near Wichita in south central Kansas, houses the Reception and Diagnostic Unit where all newly incarcerated male offenders and 70 percent of Kansas parole violators pass through for processing. Inmates can expect to stay in this high security facility between 4 and 6 weeks, long enough for child support matters to be addressed.

FIRST STEPS: INTERVIEW AND DATA ENTRY

Donna Buntain is a CSE employee whose new position is funded by DOC and whose office is on-site in the Reception and Diagnostic Unit. Each day she receives a new inmate roster. Then, with list in hand, she completes a daily tour of the cell block and holds brief interviews with each new inmate, averaging 200 interviews a month. Buntain asks each inmate if he has children. If so, she has him complete a simple questionnaire about the names and ages of the children, the name of the mother, what his present relationship with the mother is like, and any information he might have about his child support case. Next, she enters the data to find case-specific information in the Kansas Automated Eligibility Child support Enforcement System (KAECSES). Buntain welcomes this opportunity to correct data in the system. Spelling and Social Security numbers are particularly problematic.



Once it's been determined that the inmate has a child support case, Buntain notifies the child support worker in the appropriate Kansas office and provides the inmate's identification number and current location, and offers assistance, if needed, to work the case. The worker then updates the case information on the multiple screens necessary to support the case. With the inmate's identification number, the assigned caseworker can track the inmate's location and release date with matches conducted with the Department of Corrections computer system.

NEXT STEPS: SEARCH AND RESEARCH

Leaving nothing to chance, with her daily list in hand, Buntain also searches KAECSES for other inmates who might not have admitted to having children, or who simply did not know about the child support case. Quite often, men in the facility are learning for the first time that they have been named the father of a child.

Although the voluntary process to establish paternity has been in place since the start of the project, last month, the project began to include genetic testing, which expedites the paternity process and frees up court time. Establishing legal parentage is very important to an inmate; without it, the child cannot be brought into the facility for a visit.

It should come as no surprise that these cases often have the highest arrearage. In 1 month alone, Kansas CSE determined that just 84 cases in the El Dorado facility accounted for \$968,340 in arrearage. "While developing this program," Buntain comments, "many different and previously unknown inmate issues have been brought to our attention. We are fortunate in Kansas to have an "arrears management group." We simply channel the issues to the workgroup to do the research. If needed, it can then develop statewide policies on how to address these issues."

PARTNERS KEEPING IN STEP

In looking back over the past 6 months, Buntain says, "This started out as a cooperative effort between two agencies that each have their own priorities. But we are learning that we share a common goal, which is to have offenders who are released into the community become self-sufficient, working, addressing their obligations, and paying child support. We have learned that working directly with noncustodial incarcerated parents on their child support issues benefits them, Child Support Enforcement, the Department of Corrections, the children and families, and, ultimately, it will help the community."

Randall Lind and Donna Buntain contributed to this article. To learn more, contact Roberta Coons, 816-426-2268 or roberta.coons@acf.hhs.gov.

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA U.S. PROBATION OFFICE OPENS THE MIGDALIA BAERGA-BUFFLER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The national offender workforce development initiative enables offenders to transition into entry-level careers that offer quality wages and opportunities for advancement. For successful integration into today's workforce, many offenders depend upon the knowledge,

skills, and abilities of professionals to help them make well-informed decisions based on information about themselves, their interests, and their career development.



Miggie, as she was affectionately known, headed the development of the District of Washington (DC's) Offender Workforce Development Program. Her attitude and passion for her work were evident because she loved working with people. Because of Miggie's dedication to the mission of workforce development, Chief Probation Officer *Gennine A. Hagar* supported the creation of the Migdalia Baerga-Bufferler Workforce Development Center.

The center officially opened the center on December 10, 2008, during a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony. Many people attended the ceremony, including Miggie's husband Neil Bufferler; U.S. District Judge Richard Roberts; Assistant Director John Hughes, Office of Probation and Pretrial Services (OPPS); and staff from OPPS, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, District of Columbia probation, the courthouse, and other criminal justice agencies.

Neil Bufferler thanked our office for including him in the ceremony, noting that the center is what Miggie's life was all about—helping others. Judge Roberts remarked, "No more, 'Here's your bus ticket and \$25; you're on your own now.' This magnificent facility's mission is to provide support to reentering offenders in securing meaningful jobs that pay well and have advancement potential. The Probation Office team works with offenders on important basics—the importance of punctuality, reliable attendance, work ethic, appropriate clothing, interview demeanor. They train them on job search databases; they give them on-site online access; they provide clothing and grooming toiletries to those without. But it's two-way. The team also works to solicit and educate employers about this labor resource." The center features a computer area where offenders can search for jobs on the Internet, use phones to set up interviews, and draft resumes. It also has a women's and men's clothes closet that contains business clothing for interviews and work.

At the center, offenders will be introduced to training that focuses on personal development and empowerment, job readiness, and job retention. During personal development and empowerment training, they will learn the importance of setting and achieving goals, the power of positive thinking, and how to recognize and then overcome personal barriers. Offenders will learn the keys to job searching, resume writing, and effective interviewing techniques. They will practice their skills during mock interviews. Finally, offenders will learn how to retain a job and advance in their careers by demonstrating dependability, punctuality, and effective communication.

When you enter the Migdalia Baerga-Bufferler Workforce Development Center, you will see a picture of Miggie with a plaque showing her most well-known quote: "If you can believe it, envision it, and have faith, you can do all things you set your mind to do in life. The sky is the limit for all those who persevere."

For more information please contact: Ms. Charo Ellis, 202-565-1473 or charo_ellis@dcp.uscourts.gov.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STUDIES THE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND PRISONS: PROVIDING WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education began a review of connecting inmates and the formerly incarcerated to higher education programming. In March 2009 the report [*Partnerships Between Community Colleges and Prisons*](#) was released to showcase the findings of study.

Most of the nearly 700,000 state prisoners released each year are ill equipped to meet the challenges of reentering society. More than two-thirds of released prisoners are arrested within three years of leaving prison, and almost half are re-incarcerated because they are lacking marketable skills, are burdened by a criminal record that makes them ineligible to be hired in many occupations, and have few supports to make transitions to society. To make matters worse, these statistics do not account for federal inmates and those currently incarcerated in jails who also are caught in this cycle of catch-and-release.



These alarmingly high recidivism rates, and the associated rising budgetary and safety costs, have caught the attention of policymakers. National public policy organizations, such as the Council of State Governments and the National Governors Association, have launched initiatives to help states develop, coordinate, and promote state and local strategies for addressing the challenges of reentry to society. The federal government, as part of the president's Prisoner Reentry Initiative, has provided more than \$100 million to communities to develop programming and training strategies to improve employment and other post-release outcomes of ex-offenders. The president's Prisoner Reentry Initiative was reauthorized and its programs expanded by the *Second Chance Act of 2007*. Inmate access to postsecondary education opportunities also was recently increased by the *Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008*. Through these and other initiatives, a growing number of states are working diligently to identify effective methods, including correctional education, to better prepare inmates for rejoining society.

Correctional education programs are intended to break the cycle of catch-and-release by providing inmates with more opportunities

to develop the skills required to succeed in their workplaces and communities. These programs range from adult basic education and secondary instruction that enable high school dropouts to earn: (1) high school credentials; (2) career and technical education credentials to equip inmates with the occupational skills needed to find and maintain employment; and (3) postsecondary education credentials to provide inmates with the necessary skills to keep pace with today's changing labor market. Other programs are designed to provide special instruction for inmates with disabilities and limited English proficiency.

THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS HOSTS MOCK JOB FAIRS TO ASSIST INMATES IN SECURING FUTURE EMPLOYMENT



Many inmates are unfamiliar with job search, application, and interview techniques. Mock job fairs gather employers and related service agencies together in an interview and information format to allow inmates job interview experience as well as an opportunity to solicit job market information and contact opportunities that can lead to job interviews, further education and training options, and provide access to community services upon release from prison.

As partners, we encourage you to assist the Bureau of Prisons in this effort and invite you to contact the Point of Contact in the table below for your local area to determine how you can participate or assist in the scheduled Mock Job Fair.

If you or your agency is interesting in participating please feel free to contact the following individuals for more information, [Mock Job Fairs](#).

FORMERLY INCARCERATED VETERANS ARE REQUESTED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS TO ATTEND "STAND DOWNS"

Veterans "Stand Down" events are happening around the country, including many events planned over the summer months. Stand Downs are community-based events targeting homeless veterans and designed to offer a welcoming atmosphere, a safe gathering place, and easy access to a broad range of services for homeless veterans. Stand Downs are derived from the military practice of "standing down" from customary activity or the front line.

Community volunteers are encouraged to take part in these events. Visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs [website](#) to identify a contact for each of the events listed here.

For more information on the Homelessness Prevention and Incarcerated Veterans Program please contact Jim McGuire, PhD, Program Manager, Homelessness Prevention and Incarcerated Veterans Program, at 310-478-3711 ext. 41450, email: James.McGuire@va.gov.



HIGHLIGHTS

MEINEKE HONORED BY CONGRESS IN PROMOTING PRISONER REENTRY TRAINING

[Meineke](#) has been a strong partner in supporting prisoner reentry for inmates and individuals with criminal records. By providing training, employment and resources for these activities they were honored by the U.S. Congress. In October they were recognized for their great contribution to prisoner reentry through their Second Chance Program. Congresswoman, Representative Sue Myrick, of North Carolina provides honors at the U.S. House of Representatives.

View the [video](#).

DALLAS MAYOR APPOINTS PRISONER RE-ENTRY CZAR TO COORDINATE SERVICES

Dallas has a new Re-Entry Czar – in charge of a new program to help ex-offenders find jobs, housing, education, and a new life when they return from prison. [Charles Terrell](#) doesn't wear a badge, but he has been involved in criminal justice for the past 40 years. He served as Chairman of the Texas Department of Corrections and Texas Criminal Justice System, was founder of [Safer Dallas/Better Dallas](#), and starting on May 22nd he is the city's new Prisoner Re-Entry Czar. He will lead the new DOORS program: Dallas One-Stop Optimized Re-entry System. Terrell says 4,600 people get out of prison and return to Dallas County every Month. And he says they all need jobs.

