

TRANSFORMING THE MIDWEST LABOR FORCE WEBINAR SERIES

Exploring State Strategies to Improve Employment
Opportunities and Outcomes for Underserved,
Hard-to-Employ and Transitioning Workforce Populations



**Midwestern
Legislative
Conference**

Part III

Improving Employment Opportunities & Outcomes for Ex-Offenders

Friday, April 17, 2020 | 12:00 – 1:00 pm CST

Representative Dave Greenspan
Ohio

MLC Economic Development Committee Co-Chair

Ms. Erica Nelson
Project Manager
CSG Justice Center

Ms. Chytania Brown
Chief Executive Officer
Employ Milwaukee

Representative Shannon Roers-Jones
North Dakota

MLC Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee Co-Chair

Ms. Heather Gay
Education Manager
Michigan Department of Corrections

HOUSEKEEPING



This webinar is being recorded. The recording and presentation slides will be available this afternoon on the MLC Economic Development Committee page on the CSG Midwest website at www.csamidwest.org



To reduce noise on the phone line, all participants will be in “listen-only” mode during the presentations



The speakers will answer questions after the presentation:

Type questions using the “questions” pane in the control panel
Click on the “raise hand” button on the grab tab

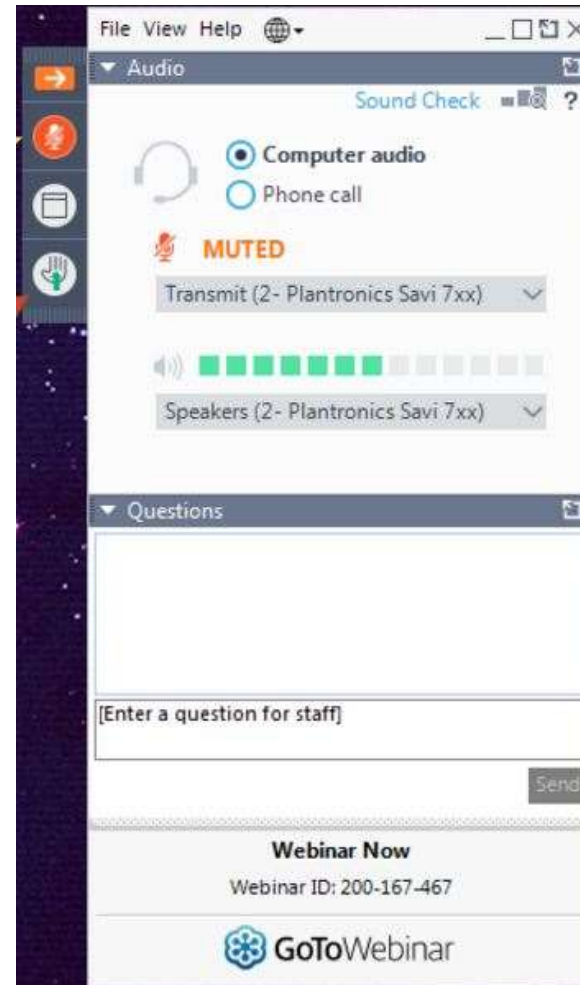


Telephone users who wish to ask a question must enter the audio PIN



If you selected “Mic & Speakers” as your audio choice, please test your system’s settings prior to asking a question

HOUSEKEEPING



MLC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



Members are legislators from 11 Midwestern states and four Canadian provinces

Committee officers



Senator John McCollister
Nebraska
Co-Chair



Representative Dave Greenspan
Ohio
Co-Chair



Representative Karlee Macer
Indiana
Vice Chair

MLC CRIMINAL JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE



Members are legislators from 11 Midwestern states and four Canadian provinces

Committee officers



Representative Shannon Roers Jones
North Dakota
Co-Chair



Senator Mattie Hunter
Illinois
Co-Chair



Senator Mike Crider
Indiana
Vice Chair

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BACKGROUND



MIDWEST

- The idea for this webinar series grew out of a roundtable discussion held by the MLC Economic Development Committee last July in Chicago
- Discussion of workforce challenges resulted in several themes
 - Tight labor markets – lack of workers to fill job openings (a situation that has recently and dramatically changed in light of the COVID-19 crisis and economic shut-down)
 - Workers facing potential displacement due to technology and automation, together with
 - Specific workforce populations being excluded/not fully engaged in labor market because of lack of skills, credentials, or other supports or barriers to employment opportunities and/or sustainable outcomes

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FOCUS



- These challenges are particularly acute in the Midwest region
 - large segments of workers in sectors facing increasing automation
 - aging workforce (with less than adequate numbers of younger workers in the pipeline to replace them)
 - little or no population growth
- Where will the workers come from to fill the labor needs of businesses, today and into the future?

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FOCUS



- Significant numbers of workers not participating or participating fully in the today's labor market
 - Why is this the case, even when unemployment is low?
 - What can policymakers be doing to help ensure no one is left behind?
- More people engaged in meaningful, well-paid jobs = great prosperity for all
 - Individuals → families → businesses → communities → states/provinces → nationally

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TOPICS



Five live, web-based teleconferences that will be made available to a wide audience of state officials, policy experts and interested parties.

In addition to the live webinars, each will be recorded and made available on the CSG Midwest website.

1. Labor Market Trends and Workforce Challenges in the Midwest
2. Incumbent Workers and Industries in Transition
3. **Ex-Offenders Entering and Re-Entering the Workplace**
4. Military Veterans, Members and Their Families
5. Disabled Workers and Workplace Integration

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GOALS



Goals of this webinar series:

- Take a deeper dive into these themes
- Explore strategies that help ensure more people prosper in in today's economy
- Share programs and policies to address the specific needs of populations impacted by economic transformation and barriers to employment opportunities

TRANSFORMING THE MIDWEST LABOR FORCE WEBINAR SERIES

IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES & OUTCOMES FOR EX-OFFENDERS



Today's webinar:

- Part of our ongoing discussion on how to engage underserved populations in addressing workforce needs of employers and skills gaps in many business sectors
- Many ex-offenders leave the criminal justice system with excellent job training, especially vocational skills
- Today's discussion will cover:
 - National trends in re-entry programs and services
 - Wraparound services for ex-offenders like transportation and housing
 - How to match training with employer's needs
 - Wisconsin's Integrated Reentry & Employment Strategies (IRES) program
 - Michigan's Vocational Village program

IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES & OUTCOMES FOR EX-OFFENDERS

PANELISTS



Ms. Erica Nelson
Project Manager
CSG Justice Center



Ms. Chytania Brown
Chief Executive Officer
Employ Milwaukee



Ms. Heather Gay
Education Manager
Michigan Department of Corrections



Justice Center

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Increasing Employment Opportunities for People who have Criminal Records

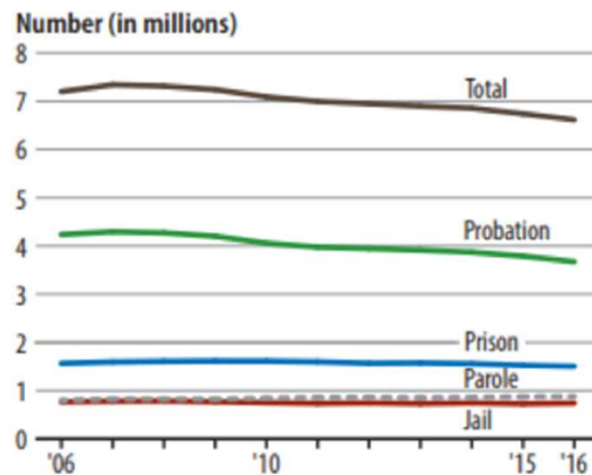
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WEBINAR SERIES

April 17, 2020 | Erica Nelson

Correctional systems across the country are managing large populations.¹

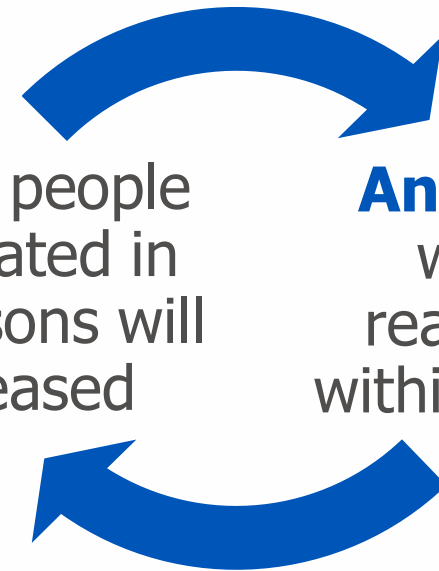
1 in 38 adults are under correctional supervision

Total population under the supervision of U.S. adult correctional systems, 2006–2016

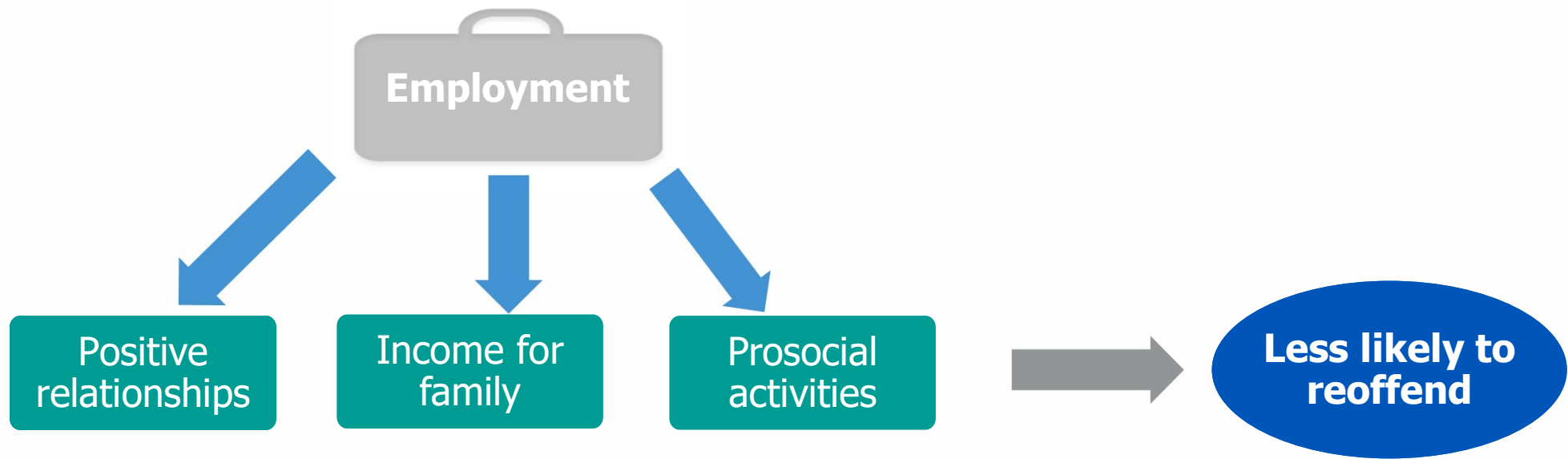


95% of people incarcerated in state prisons will be released

And 68% will be rearrested within 3 years



Employment is an important factor in a person's successful reentry.²



Having a felony conviction and/or having been in prison can make people less employable.³

Skill deterioration*

Lack of access to prosocial networks*

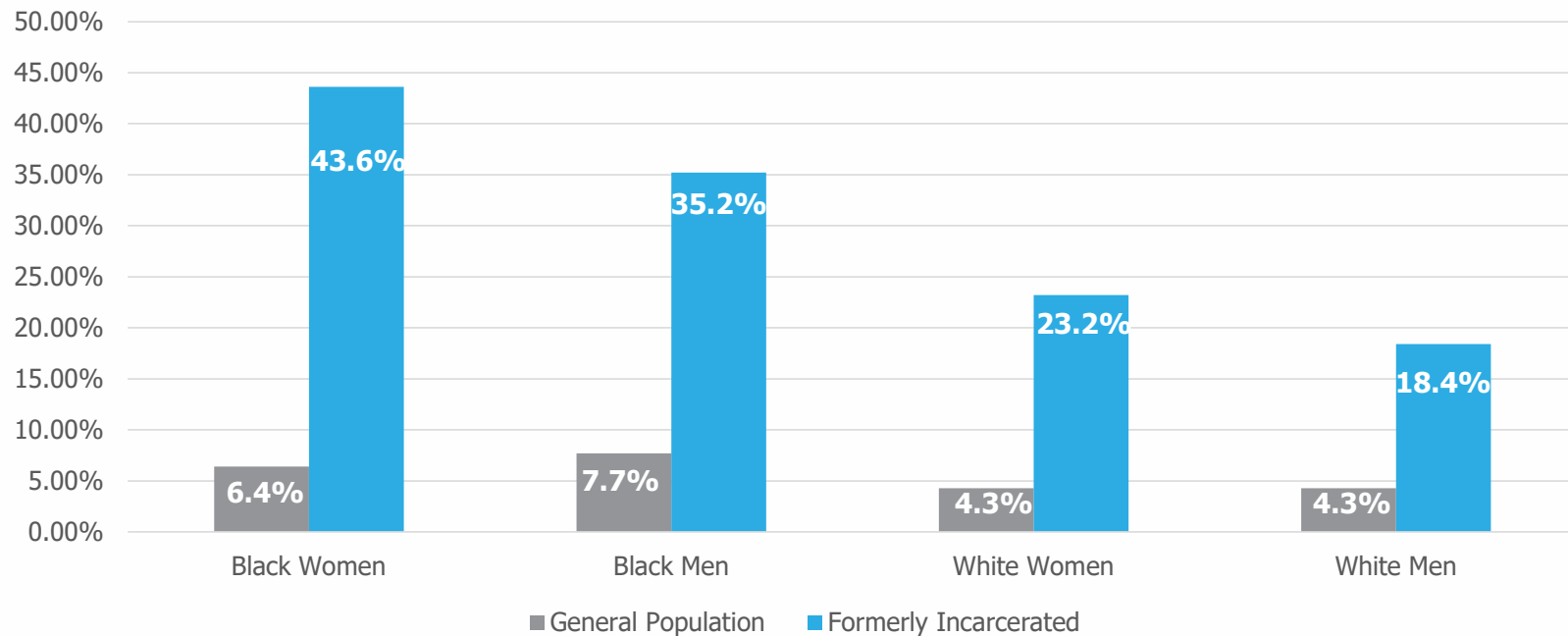
Employer bias

Legal barriers to employment

**For people who spent time in prison*

Incarceration has a greater impact on employment for people and communities of color. ⁴

Unemployment rates of people age 35-44 among the U.S. general public and formerly incarcerated population



How do we break the cycle?



Address common barriers to employment for people who have criminal records ⁵

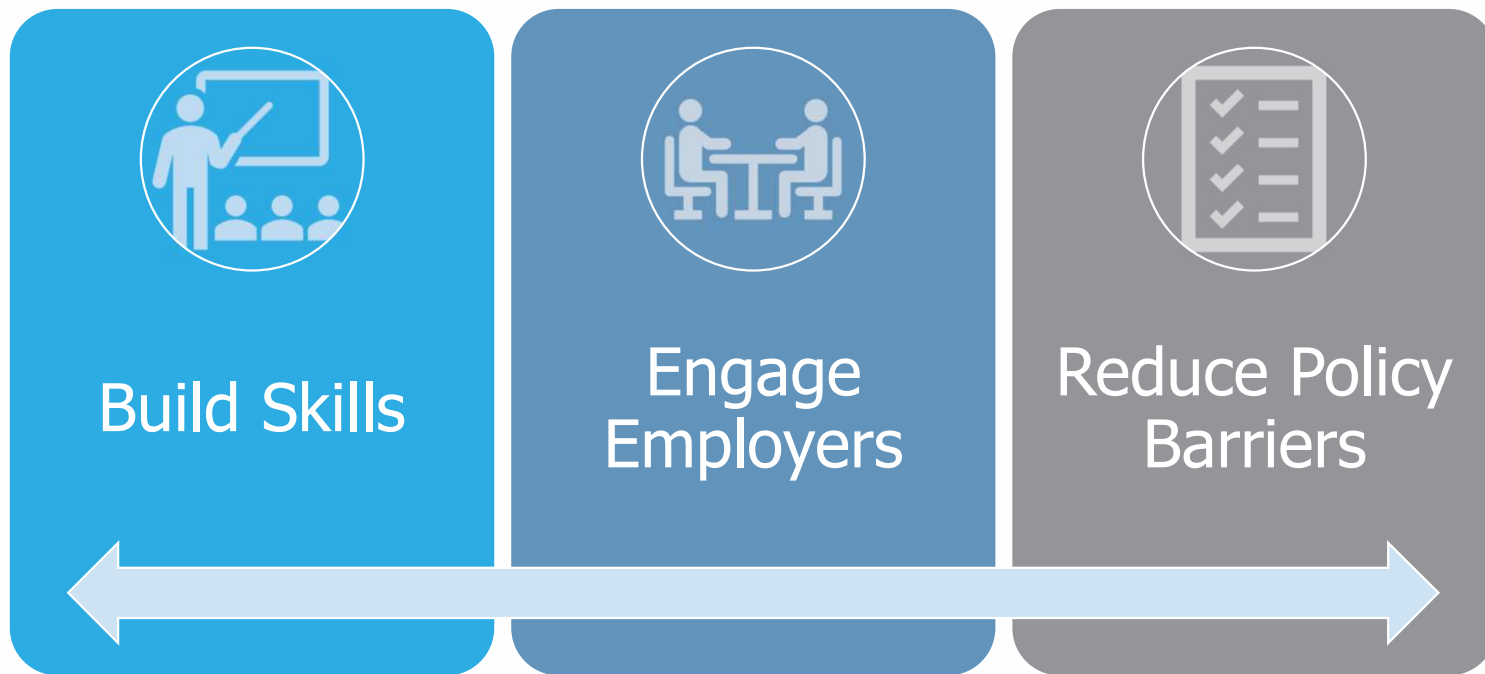
*Areas highlighted are also factors associated with committing future crime

Family, Logistical, and Legal Challenges	Education and Skills Gap	Needs Related to Responsiveness of Interventions
Lack of childcare	Low education level	Mental illness
High-conflict family situation*	Lack of occupation skills	Substance addiction*
Transportation problems	Limited work experience	Learning disability
Lack of stable housing	Lack of "soft" skills*	Lack of motivation
Legal barriers to employment	Gaps in work experience	Negative attitudes about work*
Lack of proper documentation		Poor physical health

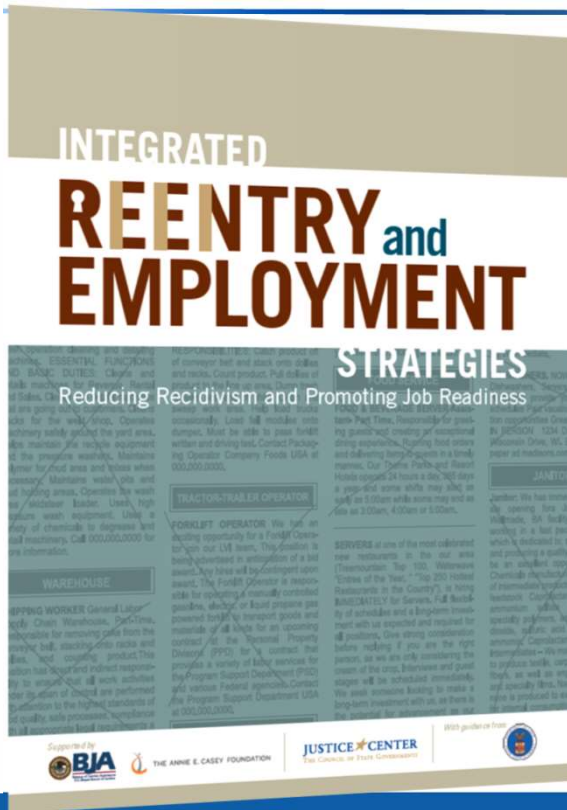
Polling question: What is the greatest barrier to employment for people who have criminal records in your community?

- (A) Limited work experience
- (B) Legal barriers to employment
- (C) Lack of occupational skills
- (D) Lack of “soft” skills
- (E) Transportation challenges

Strategies to increase employment opportunities for people who have criminal records



To build skills, bridge and integrate best practices from the corrections and workforce development systems



Tailor interventions based on participant's assessed risk to reoffend and level of job readiness

Structure high-risk participants' time with soft skill interventions that utilize **cognitive-behavioral, social learning approaches**

Provide education and hands-on training that focus on **employment sector needs and lead to credentialing**

Create partnerships with agencies that offer **supportive services** to address non-skill-related barriers to employment (e.g., transportation, substance addiction)

Facilitate connections to **employers**

Four strategies to consider when engaging employers about hiring people with criminal records.

Collect Information	Listen to Employers	Establish Partnerships	Create Win-Win Opportunities
Identify growth industries	Request guidance in development of programs	Build relationships with employer champions	Partner with workforce agencies to provide job training services
Inventory barriers (e.g., occupational licensing restrictions)	Identify marketable skills	Convene employers by sector	Create hiring incentives (e.g., wage subsidies)
Understand implications of state and local hiring policies	Understand hiring practices	Work with chambers of commerce to engage new employers	

States are adopting different strategies to address the use of criminal records in employment decisions.

Record Clearance

- Allows a person to remove their criminal record from public viewing (e.g., seal, expunge, etc.)
- Relieves a person from disclosing the existence of a criminal record when seeking employment (in many cases)*

*Varies by state and clearance policies

"Ban the Box" (a fair chance hiring policy)

- Removes conviction history question(s) from job application and delays conviction history inquiries
- Suggests that employers consider how much time has passed since the conviction
- Offers job applicants a chance to explain their criminal record later in the interviewing/hiring process

Occupational Licensing Reforms

- Provides guidance for reviewing criminal records in licensing decisions.
- Includes features such as:
 - No "blanket bans"
 - Consider evidence of rehabilitation
 - Direct relationship test
 - Allow pre-qualification

Certificates of Relief/Rehabilitation

- Affirms that a person has met rehabilitation and training standards
- Often includes provisions that shield employers from negligent hiring claims
- Removes employment restrictions set by the state after conviction, including restrictions on licensing

References

1. Danielle Kaeble and Mary Cowhig, *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2016* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018); Timothy Hughes and Doris James Wilson, *Reentry Trends in the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2002); Mariel Alper, Matthew R. Durose, and Joshua Markman, *2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-up Period (2005–2014)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018).
2. Graffam et al., "Variables affecting successful reintegration as perceived by offenders and professionals," *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 40, no. 1–2 (2004): 147–171; Christy Visher, Sara Debus, and Jennifer Yahner, *Employment After Prison: A Longitudinal Study of Releases in Three States* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, 2008); Robert J. Sampson and John H. Laub, *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).
3. Cherrie Bucknor and Alan Barber, *The Price We Pay: Economic Costs of Barriers to Employment for Former Prisoners and People Convicted of Felonies* (Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2016).
4. Lucius Couloute and Daniel Kopf. *Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people* (Prison Policy Initiative, July 2018).
5. Le'Ann Duran, Martha Plotkin, Phoebe Potter and Henry Rosen, *Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies: Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness* (New York: The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2013).

Thank You!

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For more information please contact Erica Nelson (enelson@csg.org)

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Chytania Brown
President and CEO

EMPLOY MILWAUKEE PRESENTATION

**Partnering with Corrections to Promote Reentry and
Employment**



EMI Commitment to Reentry Programming

- Wisconsin has 11 Workforce Development Board (WDB) and Employ Milwaukee is the largest WDB in the State;
- Approximately 33% of individuals released from WI State prisons return to Milwaukee County and around 14,000 are under supervision of the WI DOC in Milwaukee County;
- 74% assessed at having a medium to high risk to reoffend
- 56% assessed at having a probable or highly probable job readiness need



Employ Milwaukee's Reentry Department

- In 2016 EMI developed a Reentry Unit to assist returning citizens overcome barriers to employment and provide innovative sources of talent for employers
- Staff are trained in best practices from workforce development and corrections fields (cognitive behavioral interventions, trauma informed care, motivational interviewing, etc.)



EMI Collaboration and Justice Partnerships

- Employ Milwaukee manages the Windows to Work (pre-post release program with DOC)
- The Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies (IRES) project
- External funding from WI DOC, DOJ, and BJA
- Support from County and State executive leadership
- LEAP Grant created 1st Job Center in Milwaukee County HOC
- Expanded to 3 Job Centers in State Correctional institutions with another 4 scheduled end of 2020



Lessons Learned

- Must develop a shared language
- Make certain line staff fully understand the project and goals prior to implementation
- Pre-release services should include cognitive programming
- Reach-in should occur more than 30 days prior to release
- Develop strong incentives both financial and non-financial
- Integrated data systems
- Promoting success stories and tracking/sharing impact on community

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

CORRECTIONAL
EDUCATION

VOCATIONAL VILLAGE



Correctional Education – Michigan's Largest Provider of Adult Education

- Operate 29 schools statewide
- 265 dedicated Education Staff
- Approximately 6,500 prisoners are in school on any given day

Current Vocational Village Data

- Total # of Villagers Paroled since 2016: 830
- Employment Rate (March 2020): 65%
- Return to Prison Rate: 4.9% or 41 Villagers

Vocational Village Model

- Vocational Counseling and Application
- Prisoners Compete to Participate
- Participants live in Dedicated Housing Units
- Incentives
- Simulate a Full Day of Work
- Soft Skills Training
- Employability Training
- Other Programming
- Obtain Vital Documents
- Host Employer Job Fairs and Tours
- Job Offer before Release

Vocational Village Job Developers

- Developed relationships with over 600 employers across the state
- Ensure students have their Workforce Development Packets
- Bi-weekly email blast to those employers that includes resumes of Vocational Village graduates
- Facilitate Job Interviews for Vocational Villagers
- Coordinate efforts with On-site Institutional Parole Agents and Facility Coordinator and Parole Agents
- Certificate of Employability
- Obtain Employment
- Secure Tools and Items needed for Work

Handlon Vocational Village

- Carpentry
- Plumbing
- Electrical
- Automotive
- Computer Numerically Controlled Machine Tool
- Robotics
- Welding
- Forklift Operation
- Employment Readiness and Workforce Development

Parnall Vocational Village

- Carpentry
- Computer Numerically Controlled Machine Tool
- Robotics
- Concrete
- Masonry
- Automotive
- Commercial Drivers License Truck driving
- Forklift Operation
- Tree Trimming – partnership with DTE
- Computer Coding – partnership with The Last Mile
- Employment Readiness and Workforce Development

Women's Huron Valley Vocational Village

- Carpentry
- 3D Printing
- Robotics
- Cosmetology
- Food Technology
- Commercial Drivers License Truck driving
- Forklift Operation
- Computer Coding
- Employment Readiness and Workforce Development

Purpose of Our Initiatives

- To streamline the pipeline from prison to employment and/or education by:
 - Finding EMPLOYERS who are committed to hiring SKILLED ex-offenders
 - Developing public/private sector understanding of the vocational training and workforce development inside prison
 - Identifying marketable skills and training curricula to address current employment demands
 - MDOC is open to expansion based on EMPLOYER NEEDS

IMPROVING
EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES
& OUTCOMES
FOR EX-OFFENDERS

DISCUSSION

Questions?

Comments?

IMPROVING
EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES
& OUTCOMES
FOR EX-OFFENDERS

RESOURCES



The Council of State Governments

[MLC Economic Development Committee](#)

[MLC Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee](#)

CSG Justice Center

[Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies](#)

Employ Milwaukee

[Reentry Employment Services](#)

Michigan Dept. of Corrections

[Vocational Village](#)

TRANSFORMING THE MIDWEST LABOR FORCE WEBINAR SERIES



Thank you for joining us today!

- Future webinars in the Transforming the Midwest Labor Force series:
 - Military Veterans, Members & Their Families
Target date: week of May 11
 - Disabled Workers & Workplace Integration
Target date: week of June 8
- Contact Laura Tomaka (ltomaka@csg.org)
- Webinar Series – Confronting a Crisis: The Midwest Responds to the Coronavirus Pandemic (every Thursday at 10:00 am CDT, through May 21)
- Visit csgmidwest.org for more information