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

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

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Project Manager
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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
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.csgmidwest.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
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
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
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
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?
• Significant numbers of workers not participating or participating fully in the today’s labor market
  o Why is this the case, even when unemployment is low?
  o 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
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
Goals of this webinar series:

- Take a deeper dive into these themes
- Explore strategies that help ensure more people prosper 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
Increasing Employment Opportunities for People who have Criminal Records

TRANSFORMING THE MIDWEST LABOR FORCE 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

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. 

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

- Black Women: 6.4% (General Population) vs. 43.6% (Formerly Incarcerated)
- Black Men: 7.7% (General Population) vs. 35.2% (Formerly Incarcerated)
- White Women: 4.3% (General Population) vs. 23.2% (Formerly Incarcerated)
- White Men: 4.3% (General Population) vs. 18.4% (Formerly Incarcerated)
How do we break the cycle?

- Incarceration/criminal record
- Lowered employment prospects
- Failed reentry (recidivism)
Address common barriers to employment for people who have criminal records

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

*Areas highlighted are also factors associated with committing future crime
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

- Build Skills
- Engage Employers
- Reduce Policy Barriers
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collect Information</th>
<th>Listen to Employers</th>
<th>Establish Partnerships</th>
<th>Create Win-Win Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify growth industries</td>
<td>Request guidance in development of programs</td>
<td>Build relationships with employer champions</td>
<td>Partner with workforce agencies to provide job training services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory barriers (e.g., occupational licensing restrictions)</td>
<td>Identify marketable skills</td>
<td>Convene employers by sector</td>
<td>Create hiring incentives (e.g., wage subsidies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand implications of state and local hiring policies</td>
<td>Understand hiring practices</td>
<td>Work with chambers of commerce to engage new employers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
States are adopting different strategies to address the use of criminal records in employment decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record Clearance</th>
<th>“Ban the Box” (a fair chance hiring policy)</th>
<th>Occupational Licensing Reforms</th>
<th>Certificates of Relief/Rehabilitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Allows a person to remove their criminal record from public viewing (e.g., seal, expunge, etc.)&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>• Removes conviction history question(s) from job application and delays conviction history inquiries</td>
<td>• Provides guidance for reviewing criminal records in licensing decisions.</td>
<td>• Affirms that a person has met rehabilitation and training standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relieves a person from disclosing the existence of a criminal record when seeking employment (in many cases)*</td>
<td>• Suggests that employers consider how much time has passed since the conviction</td>
<td>• Includes features such as:</td>
<td>• Often includes provisions that shield employers from negligent hiring claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Offers job applicants a chance to explain their criminal record later in the interviewing/hiring process</td>
<td>❏ No “blanket bans”</td>
<td>• Removes employment restrictions set by the state after conviction, including restrictions on licensing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>*</sup>Varies by state and clearance policies
References


Thank You!

Join our distribution list to receive updates and announcements:

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

The presentation was developed by members of The Council of State Governments Justice Center staff. The statements made reflect the views of the authors, and should not be considered the official position of The Council of State Governments Justice Center, the members of The Council of State Governments, or the funding agency supporting the work.

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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
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
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