

## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Labor and our State partners have been matching people and jobs since the 1930's. Since the 1960's and the "Great Society" we've also been in the job training and placement business. The service delivery mechanisms have evolved, the names of the programs (and the rules) have changed, but it's still about getting people ready for, and placed in, jobs. We're going through such a change right now. Since 1982, our programs have been under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA).

Since last July 1st, though, we've been operating under a new system authorized by the Workforce Investment Act. The program is administered by a new system of local Workforce Investment Boards overseen by a similar State-level Board. The big change for our customers, though, is that many Federal social service and workforce programs have been brought under the same umbrella. This is a huge undertaking, but what it will mean is that someone who is looking for career assistance and social services will have one stop to make to get those services. Not surprisingly, this is referred to generically as the One-Stop System. In fact, each local workforce investment board area is required to have one physical location which houses all of our partners' programs --including programs from 5 or 6 Federal cabinet Departments. A full list of the partners is shown in the file called "partners."

Of course, in many areas each partner will also have other offices, but we expect that at the State & local level these offices will be linked through a "one-stop operating system" on an intranet. These connections are just now getting made in most States. One big advantage to this new system for ex-offenders is that they won't have to fill out new paperwork if they are getting, say, job training and literacy skills from two different organizations that are part of the local one-stop center.

Which brings us to--what services do we offer? The new law categorizes the workforce development services as "core," "intensive," and "job training" -- the specifics are shown in the file "services". Basically, this is done by a triage system. If someone can get an appropriate job through core services, good. If not, then, the individual can receive intensive services and then job training as a last resort. Core and intensive services will be far more likely to be of immediate benefit to as ex-offenders than job training, for two reasons. First, the amount of funding allocated to job training in a local area will be very limited. Second, income support is generally not made available to job training students. We know that job training students without a means of income support (spousal income, for example) often do not complete training. Approval of job training often depends on for the individual's demonstrating they have this separate income support.

One thing that most corrections staff and inmates do not know is that Labor Department does not administer a comprehensive "ex-offender" program, per se. This is not to say,

however, that ex-offenders aren't part of our target populations, far from it. In 1996, for example, 14% of the individuals that received intensive services were ex-offenders. The fact that most ex-offenders are low-income, long-term unemployed individuals puts them right in the center of our universe of need. The Welfare-to-Work "noncustodial parent" program doesn't target ex-offenders, but because many inmates have families eligible for/receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) payments makes them eligible for the extra services and training that WtW offers. (Some States don't participate in WtW, however.) This is an excellent program for parents who are estranged from their families and wish to reconnect with – and support – them.

Two Federal programs DO have ex-offenders as a target group. The first, the Federal Bonding Program, administered by our State partners, is a way of providing an employer with a fidelity bond for an otherwise unbondable worker. See the file "bonding" for more information. The second is the Worker Opportunity Tax Credit, which provides a tax credit to an employer which will hire, and retain, a "high-risk" individual including most ex-offenders. A similar program, The Welfare-to-Work Opportunity Tax Credit, offers a somewhat greater tax credit for a rather more limited clientele. See the folder "tax credit" for information on these programs.

Now, what can YOU do to secure these types of benefits for your inmates and ex-offenders along with job assessment, counseling, job search training, and access to millions of job openings (among others)? Two things.

First, you can ensure that the inmate is prepared to get a job when he or she leaves your institution. This includes making sure that all of the positive work the inmates have done while they were with you is documented and goes with them when they leave in a release portfolio. Ex-offenders looking for work are just like any job applicants, they need to have their credentials with them when they go to job interviews. This also includes the types of personal identification that they will need to verify their eligibility to take employment. The file named "I-9" describes the types of ID that can be used for this purpose. We came across an interesting article (in the file "articles") in one of the Atlanta newspapers recently which speaks directly to this problem.

Second, you need to make sure that an inmate who leaves your facility has the name and address of the workforce development center nearest to their home. Do this even if they are going to a community corrections facility immediately from your institution. If they are placed into a job by community corrections, they'll want another job sooner or later, and we have the services to help them do this. One of the wrinkles in the new Workforce Investment Act is that if someone is working in a non-self-sustaining job, they continue to be eligible for intensive services. It is important to note that we don't have a complete roster of what programs are available at each center. Local One-Stops systems are encouraged to develop linkages with other appropriate programs. In addition, we don't know each client. He or she may be an ex-offender, but he or she may also be a Native American, older worker, veteran, or any number of

other things which would have an impact on the services they might need and qualify for. This can only be determined at the local one-stop center.

We have included a directory "centers" which has a file for each State listing their current workforce development centers. You will notice that many States use a different "brand name" for their centers, "joblink, careerlink, workforce center," etc. By including these center listings, we note that many localities are still setting up the comprehensive one-stop center required by the law.

Another important function that these centers may be able to fulfill is to provide YOU with expert guidance and services in setting up and maintaining a career development program in your institution as an adjunct to your basic and vocational education programs. The amount of service that a local agency can provide is going to vary. We know through our work with the Federal Bureau of Prisons that some local workforce agencies provide extensive services "inside the walls"-- job search training and assistance with prison job fairs (see the file "articles," again). Others do not. Even so, you can familiarize yourself with workforce development services that are offered -- especially with the cutting edge Internet services that may not be readily available to your students, and you, otherwise. Some of the incredible volume of Labor Market Information we collect and disseminate (we have information about every employer in the United States, for instance) is repackaged by third party vendors on CD and other non-Internet media. The Federal Bureau of Prisons has provided each of its institutions with a set of this employer data (called the "ALMIS employer database") for use in planning job fairs and giving inmates the addresses of companies in their home area that employ workers with their occupations. Your local workforce agency (or the State agency listed at the end of the "Tips" file), will be able to give you information about obtaining this type of material.

A couple of the files, "Tips" and "Tollfree", may be of interest. "Tips For Finding The Right Job" is a tried and true primer on job search. The version included here is without graphics. The complete version is downloadable from our basic Internet site - [www.doleta.gov](http://www.doleta.gov). The toll free number is 1-877-US2-JOBS has been created primarily to assist workers who have been laid off from their jobs what we call "dislocated workers." However, over the next few months the operators will be provided with information geared toward ex-offenders, giving inmates early information about services that will be available to them when they return home.

This is our first attempt at trying to meet the needs of corrections professionals in workforce development. Further editions of this material are planned. Please e-mail comments and suggestions to: [jhines@doleta.gov](mailto:jhines@doleta.gov).

Thanks.