



Prisoner Reentry and the Workforce System

Faith-Based and Community Organizations Meeting the Needs of Ex-Offenders Through the President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative and Ready4Work

Need

More than 650,000 men and women are released from Federal and State prisons each year. According to figures from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 67.5 percent of returning inmates will be re-arrested within three years of their release from prison and more than half will be re-incarcerated. Released prisoners face a myriad of challenges that contribute to a return to criminal activity, re-arrest, and re-incarceration. Some of these challenges include joblessness, substance abuse, mental health issues, low levels of educational attainment, and poor family connections.

Response

Evidence indicates that faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) are among the most trusted and influential institutions in the neighborhoods to which the majority of released inmates will return. Local FBCOs have many resources at their command, including buildings, volunteers, and a tradition of outreach and service. The Department of Labor (DOL) has implemented two innovative reentry programs—the Prisoner Reentry Initiative and *Ready4Work*—that draw on the unique strengths of FBCOs. These programs rely on FBCO partners to deliver a wide range of social services to ex-prisoners that provide direct links into the communities to which they are returning.

Prisoner Reentry Initiative

President Bush announced his four-year, \$300 million Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) during his 2004 State of the Union address. This program

places FBCOs at the center of social service delivery to ex-offenders. The PRI was based on results from the *Ready4Work* program and is designed to strengthen communities through local employment-focused programs that incorporate housing, mentoring, job training, and other comprehensive transitional services. In November 2005, DOL awarded PRI grants to 30 sites across the country. Each PRI site is working to reduce recidivism in their communities by helping returning, non-violent prisoners find work, mentoring support, and other services. The PRI sites will collectively serve 6,250 participants annually.

Ready4Work

In 2003, DOL launched *Ready4Work*, a three-year, \$25 million pilot program to meet the needs of ex-offenders through FBCOs. Seventeen sites were chosen for the program—11 to provide services to adult ex-offenders and 6 to serve juvenile ex-offenders. The four main components of the program were case management, pre- and post-release mentoring, job training, and job placement. Funding for the *Ready4Work* pilot program ended in August 2006.

PRI Results

The PRI sites, which began serving participants on March 1, 2006, launched with a promising start. As of February 8, 2008, PRI sites have enrolled 11,869 participants in the program; 110,733 services have been delivered to participants; and 7,080 participants have been placed into jobs. The one-year post-release recidivism rate is half the national average.

Ready4Work Results

Altogether, *Ready4Work* enrolled 4,482 participants. Of these participants, 86 percent received employment services and 63 percent received mentoring services. *Ready4Work* sites have placed 2,543 participants into jobs. Of those clients whose status is known, 2.5 percent were re-incarcerated in state institutions within 6 months of release. Only 6.9 percent of the same population was re-incarcerated at the one year mark. Compared to the benchmark re-incarceration study from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the *Ready4Work* figures are half the national re-incarceration rate of five percent at six months. These figures are also 44 percent lower than the national re-incarceration rate at one year after release.

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Helpful DOL Resources for Faith-Based or Community Organizations in Reentry

The following three resources can be found at <http://www.dol.gov/cfbc/reentry.htm#resources>

Mentoring Ex-Prisoners: A Guide for Reentry Programs

This manual provides guidelines and recommendations intended to address the challenges and to increase the benefits of mentoring adult ex-prisoners as part of their involvement in reentry programs.

Ready4Reentry: A Prisoner Reentry Toolkit

This toolkit is a guide for faith-based or community organization interested in establishing or enhancing their prisoner reentry program. This document covers a variety of topics, such as recruiting, case management, job placement, mentoring, and forming successful partnerships.

Just Out

This promising practices guide examines the early implementation of Ready4Work and reports on the best emerging practices in four key program areas.

Other Helpful Resources

Making a Difference Through Strategic Business Partnerships

This booklet reveals and highlights effective strategies for ways in which non-profit organizations can form fruitful partnerships with businesses to provide jobs for their clients. <http://www.dol.gov/cfbc/makingadifference.pdf>

Technical Assistance Videos

The Touching Lives and Communities Technical Assistance Video workshops can be viewed from your computer. The viewer can search by topics and the table of contents, view the video, read the transcript and utilize links to supporting materials. The workshops cover the following topics: Capacity Building and Strategic Planning, Corporation and Foundation Giving, Board Development and Individual Giving, Government Grant Applications and Grant Management and Program Evaluation. http://www.dol.gov/cfbc/virtual_training.htm

Department of Justice Reentry Resources

This five-page document highlights programs, services and funding for prisoner reentry. <http://www.usdoj.gov/fbc/docs/fed-prisoner-reentry-resources.pdf>



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