



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION AND REHABILITATION

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WORKPLACE DIGITAL SKILL TRAINING

This federally-funded initiative equips Participants of the Montgomery County's Department of Correction and Rehabilitation's Pre-Release and Reentry Services (PRRS) Division with the Digital Skills Training required to find, secure, and excel in employment opportunities, and thereby assists them in their successful return from incarceration back to their homes and communities.

The initiative runs as a partnership between:

PRRS
Montgomery College
Work Force Solutions Group
(The County's Operator of One-Stop Career Centers).

The program partners and the Residents of the Pre-Release Program are grateful for funding of this initiative by the taxpayers of the United States of America through a grant award (2010-RV-BX-0006) of \$351,011 under The Second Chance Act of 2007 Section 215: (Adult Demonstration and Technology Career & Training) Administed by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Abstract

The Montgomery County (Maryland) Department of Correction and Rehabilitation (DOCR) has received a 12-month demonstration project that addresses the widespread technology skill deficits among the incarcerated adults participating in the Department's Pre-Release and Reentry Services (PRRS) Division's community-based work release program. The project responds to the rapidly changing regional demand for higher skilled workers particularly in technology fields.

The "Workplace Digital Skill Training Initiative" funds Montgomery College— the state's largest community college -- to offer training opportunities to all of the 550 individuals (called "residents") transferred from local, state, and federal correctional institutions to the Montgomery County Pre-Release Center each year during the project's duration. It serves an incarcerated population of individuals, some of whom have been convicted of high-risk offenses, who are within 12 months of completing their sentences, and who are returning to communities in Montgomery County and the larger Washington D.C. metropolitan area.

Under the project, Workforce Solutions Group – the operator of the County's four Montgomery Works One Stop Career Centers – supports the residents through the training programs and steers them to appropriate job placements that would make use of their newly developed skills. PRRS provides in-kind staff assistance to manage the project and to ensure that participants develop comprehensive and individualized reentry plans that address such issues as treatment, health, housing, and family engagement. These services also include those offered by the County's Health and Human Services Department, onsite GED classes, and onsite mentoring services. At the Pre-Release Center, funding maintains one classroom that is dedicated to teaching the digital skills training curricula..

Over the course of the project period, 400 participants are expected to complete a 10-hour course on digital literacy; 140 are expected to complete a 32-hour class in basic computer skills; and 15 are expected to complete an industry-recognized certificate program at Montgomery College. This multi-tiered curriculum efficiently and effectively serves large numbers of individuals while reserving the more intensive and costlier training for those who demonstrate greater interest and aptitude. Significantly, the training is offered at times and locations that would permit project participants to fulfill their work and program requirements with PRRS. As such, project participants continue to abide by the evidenced-based "Work First" philosophy of PRRS, and the expectation is that they would be seeking employment or working jobs concurrently with training. Specific performance metrics concerning program quality and employment outcomes are listed in the proposal.

The project fully complements the cutting-edge reentry work done by the nationally-recognized PRRS in providing returning offenders with better employment opportunities to reduce recidivism and improve public safety. It holds great promise to demonstrate how local "jail" correctional programs can effectively and efficiently provide technology career training for its population. Further, the project brings together two of the major stakeholders of the County's Workforce Development System – the community college and the One-Stop Career Center operator – along with other supportive service agencies that will increase the regional capacity to assist individuals with criminal histories train for and obtain employment in technology fields.