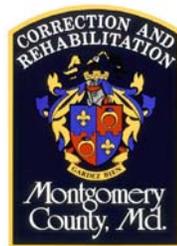


HOW ONE-STOP CAREER CENTERS CAN HELP EX-OFFENDERS

And Why They Are Needed
Montgomery County, MD's Experience



Presented at the 20th Annual Conference of the
National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (Condensed), May 31 – June 3, 2009

By Joyce Reimherr, MontgomeryWorks/Montgomery County Correctional Facility

Reentry Employment Services Coordinator


Your Workforce Connection

Why Support Offender Reentry?

- **Because ex-offenders are in our communities**
 - 650,000 released from state and federal prisons each year.
 - 9 million released from the nation's local jails.
- **For financial reasons.**
 - The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics reports more than \$68 billion spent on corrections in 2006.
 - Ex-offender employment can turn a tax burden into a tax payer.

- **To reduce crime and victimization**
 - Ex-offenders who work are 1/3 less likely to reoffend!
- **To stabilize families and create positive role models for children**
- **To transform lives through the dignity of work**

But Ex-Offenders need help!

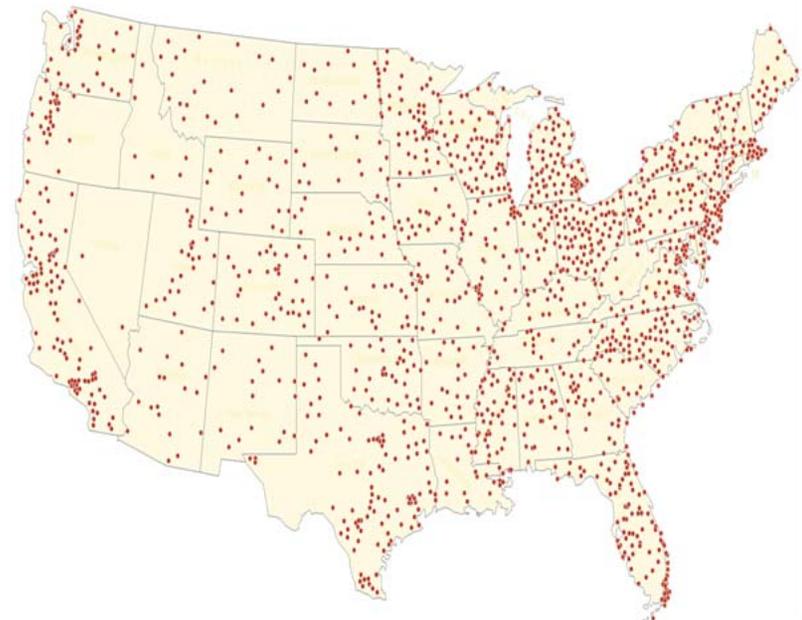
- Nationally, well over 50% of all offenders are reincarcerated, and that is not acceptable from any perspective of public safety and effective community intervention. This dreadful revolving door must be closed.

Art Wallenstein, Director
Montgomery County, MD
Department of Corrections and
Rehabilitation

One-Stop Career Centers can be a key source of employment help.

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- One-Stop Career Centers are the nation's public workforce development and employment centers.
- They're in the community where ex-offenders face the stresses and temptations of everyday life.
- They are everywhere! More than 3,000 in jurisdictions across the country.





Where the rubber
meets the road

- They are in the community, where the offender faces the stresses and temptations of everyday life.
- And are a resource for life – here today and tomorrow!

**They have a proven track record in⁷
helping people find work!**



**They have what it
takes to help
ex-offenders
find what they
want most**

- **To stay out of jail**
- **Earn an honest living**
- **Support their families.**

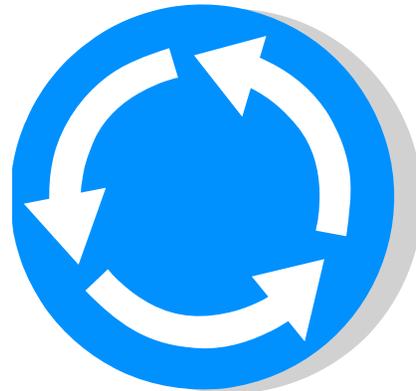
Montgomery Works
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Research on what lowers recidivism

- Lower recidivism among those employed (Sampson & Laub, 1993).
- Substantial reduction when employed shortly after release (Mallon & Phalan, 2008).
- Most important: finding high quality jobs offering stability, living wages, benefits and a career trajectory within a year (Bucklen, 2006).

Common problem for ex-offenders⁹

- A circular career path moving from one low level job to another.



One-Stop Career Centers can help break that cycle.

One-Stops offer what ex-offenders need to succeed...

- Resources for rapid reemployment
 - Job search assistance
- Opportunity to climb a career ladder
 - Occupational skills training



Montgomery County, MD

- Has pioneered in use of the One-Stop system to support ex-offender employment.
- Operates a One-Stop Career Center within its correctional facility linked to a Reentry Employment Program in the community One-Stop Centers.

Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF)

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- 1,028 person capacity facility housing inmates in pre-trial status or serving sentences up to 18 months.
- **ReEntry for All** – A holistic approach providing wrap-around services and discharge planning

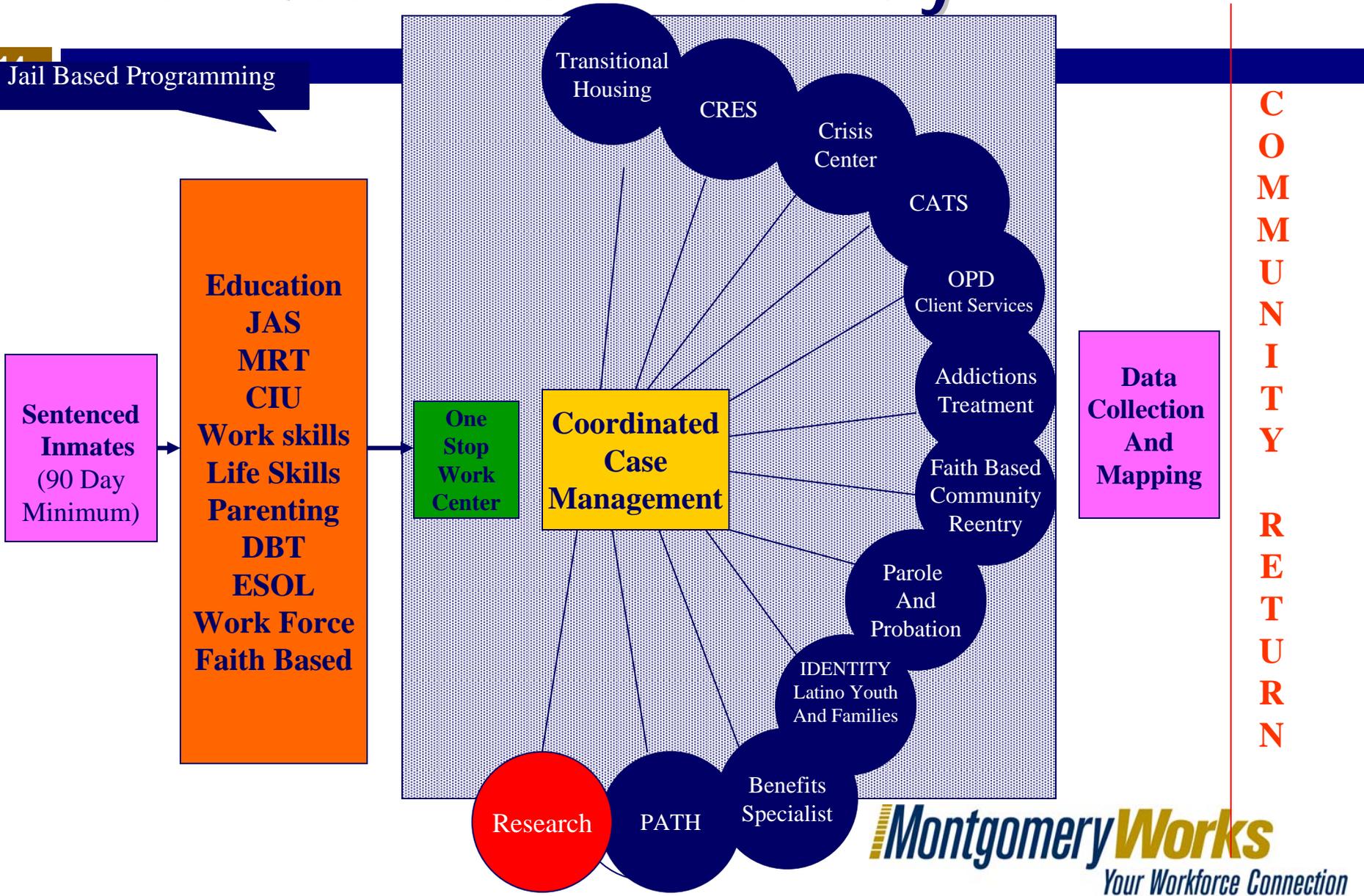
Pre-Release and Reentry Services

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- 171 Bed Residential Work Release Program
- 45 Bed Home Confinement
- Volunteer run Welcome Home program provides career support and job search services.

MCCF/Jail Based Re-Entry

Jail Based Programming



COMMUNITY RETURN

Typical Re-Entry Client Needs

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- **Ongoing medications (physical and psychiatric)**
- **Ongoing mental health counseling**
- **Substance abuse counseling**
- **Domestic Violence Programs**
- **Shelter Referrals**
- **Food Stamps and food bank**
- **Access to community health clinics**
- **Job and educational programs**

Reentry Collaborative Case Management

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- Parole and Probation
- Office of the Public Defender
- Police
- Mental Health Treatment Providers
- Substance Abuse Treatment Providers
- Crisis Center
- Faith Based Organizations
- Medical Providers
- “In House” Case managers and treatment providers
- **MontgomeryWorks One-Stop Career Center**

On average we have 40+ direct service providers present!

Partners

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- Meet Bi-weekly
- Key to post release planning
- Identification of resources
- Sharing Information
- Linkages are initiated
- Referrals are made
- Partnerships are initiated
- Formal and Informal networking

Preparation for Employment Success

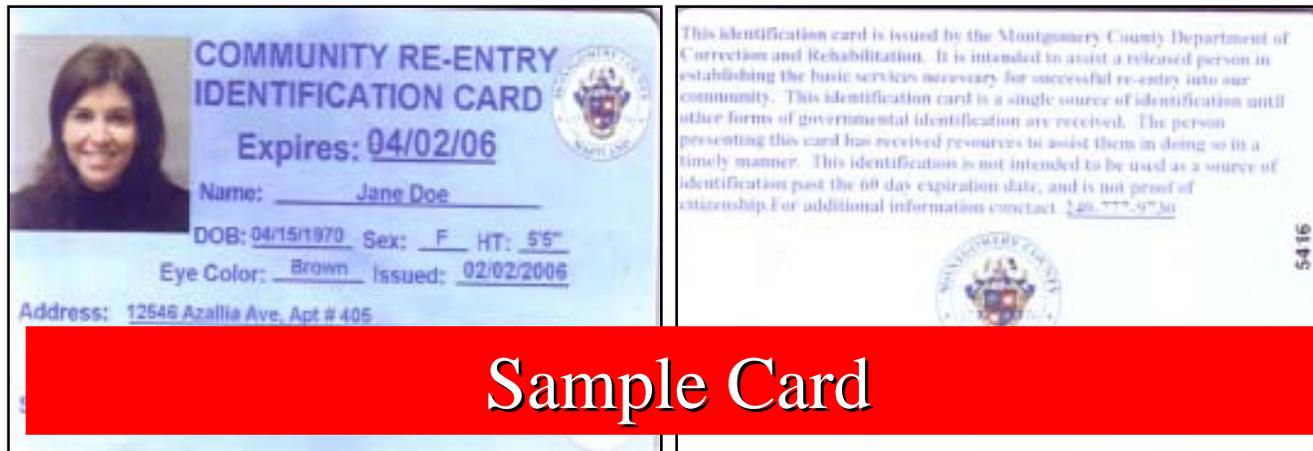
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- Work opportunities in kitchen, laundry, maintenance, medical
- Bakery training program
- Food service training
- Biohazard training
- GED/ABE/ESOL classes
- Small business and Salesmanship classes
- Jail-based One-Stop Career Center!

Re-Entry ID Card

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- Legal Photo Identification
- RIDE ON bus/Transit Pass
- Library Card for computer access



MCCF/MontgomeryWorks One-Stop Career Center behind the walls

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- MontgomeryWorks is part of the nationwide system of One-Stop Career Centers.
 - Provides services to job seekers *and* employers.
 - Under the Montgomery County Department of Economic Development, Montgomery County Workforce Investment Board, and Maryland State Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation.

MCCF One-Stop Career Center behind the walls

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- Resource Library
- Video Room
- Legal Identification Card
- Practice Interviewing Room
- Computer Lab
- Internet Access (Limited)

MontgomeryWorks/MCCF One-Stop Career Center behind the walls

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What has worked for us!

The Sales Model of Job Search

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- **Know your product – You!**
 - Interests, values, work environment preferences, and skills (occupation specific, transferrable, self-management)

- **Know your customer and the marketplace**
 - (Employer and labor market)

- **Have an effective advertising and marketing campaign**
 - (Action plan, application, resumes, interview skills, networking)

Holland Code

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- People can be described as a combination of six personality types.
 - Realistic
 - Investigative
 - Artistic
 - Social
 - Enterprising
 - Conventional

Use of Department of Labor Websites (via controlled internet access)

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- America's Career Information Network
 - www.acinet.org

- Career Voyages
 - www.careervoyages.gov

- O*Net
 - <http://online.onetcenter.org>

- Maryland Workforce Exchange
 - www.mwejobs.com

Use of the State Labor Exchange

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www.mwejobs.com



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Maryland Workforce Exchange. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Job Seeker Services, Employer Services, Provider Services, Events Calendar, Labor Market Information, and Service Locations. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for Welcome, About Us, Site Map, Feedback, and Text Only. The main content area features the Maryland Workforce Exchange logo and tagline "Where Business and People Connect". A list of services is provided, including Discover Our Services, Why Should I Enroll?, Find A Job, Post Your Resume, Find Qualified Workers, Find Training, and Research the Local Job Market. There are three main sections: "Enroll in Workforce Exchange Today!" with a dropdown menu for "I am a(n)", "Forgot your UserID/ Password ?" with a dropdown menu for "I am a(n)", and "Already Enrolled in MWE ?" with fields for User ID and Password, and a Login button. The footer contains links for Privacy Statement, Terms Of Use, Submit Questions, Service Locations, and Login.

- Post your résumé
- Search for jobs
- Locate resources
- Learn about events & job fairs in Maryland



Lively and Hands-on Training

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Inmates can get bored easily...



- Limit lecture time; move quickly from information sharing to activities
- Engage participant interests
- Involve hands-on activities, when possible
- Do tasks with them (or they're unlikely to get done).

Talking to ex-offenders about work habits and risk

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Employers want employees who are...

- Low Maintenance



Good work habits, team player, takes supervision,

- Not High Maintenance



Lots of drama, unreliable, poor Listeners, easily provoked.

Employers also want...

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Low Risk

Employees

- Employers know human nature
- Address issues inside
- Set-up supports outside



Teach 4 Step Strategy for Discussing a Criminal Background

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1. Own it.
 - Be honest about the crime, but if multiple crimes of similar nature, may mention last one and summarize the others, i.e. "I've had similar offenses in the past related to my"
2. Express remorse.
3. Say what you've learned from the experience and accomplished during incarceration.
4. Close our with your goals now.

Sample Verbal Disclosure

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In 1966, I was convicted of sale of a controlled substance. I was sentenced to five years but got out in three on good behavior.

I realized I had made a some bad decisions so I took advantage of whatever opportunity I could to get my life back on track. I participated in substance abuse treatment and earned my GED. I'm a more mature person now because of what I've been through and am continuing with programs to help myself now that I'm out.

I know I have to prove myself so I'm going to try hard to be one of your best employees.

Sample Letter of Explanation

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Dear Employer:

Please accept this letter of explanation regarding my offense background. I was convicted on a first offense of distribution of a controlled dangerous substance. In January 2008, I was sentenced to 90 days at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF), but got out in 72 days because of good behavior and working in the jail.

My experience at MCCF has helped me realize that I was on the wrong path, which was not the way I wanted to live. I have used my time constructively while being incarcerated to help myself and make the best of the situation. I have worked at a job, and learned valuable new skills. I have also worked with volunteers and MCCF staff to learn how to undertake an effective job search and become a top performing employee.

Please note that an employer who hires me is eligible for up to a \$2400 tax credit and I can be bonded for up to \$5,000 at no charge to you for a period of six months with no cost to you.

My main goal now is to make an honest living and to build upon the satisfaction of personal achievement I have discovered through incarceration. I will make every effort to be among your best employees if you give me a chance to work for you.

Sincerely,

MontgomeryWorks
Your Workforce Connection

Self-directed activity in One-Stop

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- Supervised and aided by trained student interns and **faith-based and community volunteers**
- I ask a lot of questions to find success stories to find success stores in past jobs. You can see their self esteem grow as their resume takes shape.
--Phil Graham, faith-community volunteer

Volunteer Training

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CAREERS4 TOMORROW

*Effectively Assisting
Offenders
with One-Stop
Employment Services
A Training for Faith Based
and Community Volunteers
to Work in a One-Stop
Career Center*

A Project of
Montgomery County Correctional Facility and
MontgomeryWorks Reentry Employment Program
Developed with the assistance of the US Department of Labor

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MontgomeryWorks

Community Reentry Program

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■ Monthly Visits to the Correctional Facility

- Puts name to the face of helpers who will be there post-release
- Provide tips on job search and career development services.
- Inform about bonding and tax incentives

MontgomeryWorks Community Reentry Program

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- **At the One-Stop Career Center in the community**
 - Orientations weekly
 - Assessment & planning
 - Help preparing job search tools
 - Job Search and Placement assistance

MontgomeryWorks

Community Reentry Program

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■ Job Development

- Ex-offenders group most discriminated against. May need help to get their foot in the door.
- Sell benefits:
 - Financial incentives
 - Well-screened employees. Vouch for behavior, not person.
 - Support from service providers and supervision agencies
 - Motivated workers; opportunities for skills training.
- Understand employers' main concern – Negligent hiring. Wasted time and money.

WOTC TAX Credit

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- Up to \$2400 for ex-felons within a year of release
- There is only a one-page form the employer needs to complete by the day an offer is made and another one-page form within 21 days of hire. Then claim the credit when filing annual tax return.
- Underutilized. *Let's get our businesses a tax break!*

Federal Bonding Program

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- Bonds are issued to a purchasing organization (state, Workforce Investment Board, etc.)
- Bond coverage is usually \$5,000 (but can go higher).
- Covers theft, forgery, larceny, embezzlement (but not liability).
- Effective the date of hire; generally good for six months.

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Community Reentry Program

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■ What we've learned

- Manage expectations with a Participant Agreement.
- Have them identify skills from O*Net or America's Career Information Network occupation profiles.
- Employers are reluctant to be the first to hire post-release. It's a first job that leads to the good job.
- Some favor work first; then training. Unclear what works best.
- **Collaboration with partners can expand program capacity and effectiveness.**

Partnerships

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- Reentry Partners can help One-Stop Centers succeed with **ex**-offenders post-release
 - Parole and Probation
 - Office of the Public Defender
 - Mental Health Treatment Providers
 - Substance Abuse Treatment Providers
 - Crisis Center
 - Faith Based Organizations
 - Medical Providers

Probation and Parole

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- How they can help One-Stop Career Centers!
 - Educate their clients about One-Stop use.
 - Required community service offers work experience and references
 - Have information on court orders for participation in treatment programs
 - Many employers appreciate community supervision and sober employees.
 - Have leverage to obtain employment information (different ID numbers, but often can locate with name and birthdate).

Probation and Parole

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- How One-Stop Centers can help them!
 - Provide them with the information they and their clients need to make best use of your services.
 - Do presentations at their offices for staff and clients.
 - Not having a job doesn't mean not searching for a job. Provide your mutual clients with participation record for use with courts.
 - Assist responsible clients with training

Work Release Programs

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- Help them by acquainting staff and clients of One-Stop services appropriate to their needs such as bonding and training, both pre and post-release.
- They can assist you:
 - Often know offender-receptive employers
 - If working together on clients, their employment requirements can contribute to performance
 - They have monitored, drug tested, sober workers. Employers like that.
- Some have treatment and GED programs to improve client functioning and upgrade skills.

Faith-based Volunteers

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- Different Approaches Can Work
 - Faith as motivation
 - Faith as motivation *and* means

- Expand options and services through both
 - Federal government has funded faith-based organizations as long as secular options available.

Treatment Programs

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- Psych Rehab programs with Supported Employment Programs ideal.
 - At minimum, get permission to discuss so that their treatment plan and your employment plan are in sync.
 - Encourage clients to bring their counselor or job coach to a joint planning session.

Other Partner Resources

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- **Leveraging additional staff:**
 - Senior Employment Program – for paid part-time employees for one year.
 - College and graduate school internships
 - **Criminal justice programs** – Regular staff can supervise
 - **Counseling and Social Work Programs** – Require staff person with appropriate credentials and training. Good reason to hire these professionals.

For more information, contact:

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The MontgomeryWorks
Montgomery County Correctional Facility
Reentry Employment Program

22880 Whelan Lane, Boyds, MD 20841

240-773-9839

11002 Veirs Mill Rd., Wheaton, MD 20902

301-946-1806

www.montgomeryworks.com

**MontgomeryWorks**
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