HOW ONE-STOP CAREER CENTERS CAN HELP EX-OFFENDERS

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

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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.

- 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.
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 in 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.
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-offenders

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

One-Stop Career Centers can help break that cycle.

MontgomeryWorks
Your Workforce Connection
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 Works
Your Workforce Connection
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)

- 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

- 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

- Education
  - JAS
  - MRT
  - CIU
  - Work skills
  - Life Skills
  - Parenting
  - DBT
  - ESOL
  - Work Force
  - Faith Based

- Sentenced Inmates (90 Day Minimum)
- One Stop Work Center
- Coordinated Case Management
- Transitional Housing
- CRES
- Crisis Center
- CATS
- OPD
- Client Services
- Addictions Treatment
- Faith Based Community Reentry
- Parole And Probation
- IDENTITY
- Latino Youth And Families
- Benefits Specialist
- PATH
- Research

Data Collection And Mapping

COMMUNITY RETURN

Montgomery Works
Your Workforce Connection
Typical Re-Entry Client Needs

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

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

Sample Card
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

- Resource Library
- Video Room
- Legal Identification Card
- Practice Interviewing Room
- Computer Lab
- Internet Access (Limited)
MontgomeryWorks/MCCF One-Stop
Career Center behind the walls

What has worked for us!
The Sales Model of Job Search

- **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)
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)

- 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

www.mwejobs.com

- Post your résumé
- Search for jobs
- Locate resources
- Learn about events & job fairs in Maryland
Lively and Hands-on Training

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

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... 

**Low Risk Employees**

- Employers know human nature
- Address issues inside
- Set-up supports outside
Teach 4 Step Strategy for Discussing a Criminal Background

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

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 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

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

- Supervised and aided by trained student interns and faith-based and community volunteers

- I ask a lot of questions to find success stories in past jobs. You can see their self-esteem grow as their resume takes shape.

  --Phil Graham, faith-community volunteer
Volunteer Training

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
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
At the One-Stop Career Center in the community

- Orientations weekly
- Assessment & planning
- Help preparing job search tools
- Job Search and Placement assistance
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

- 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

- 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.


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

- 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

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

- 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

- 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

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.
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

- **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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