



FY2008 RECOMMENDATION/FY08-BP52 OFFENDER EMPLOYMENT COLLABORATION

Status: Implementation Unknown

Actions/Updates

2010 UPDATE

Partial implementation. Officials from the Department of Corrections report that two Pre-Release Specialist positions are frozen due to budget constraints. DOC data systems are unable to collect information on classroom participation. However, manual data collection shows 3,846 inmates completed the Pre-Release Program with 12,329 accessing the Career & Resource Rooms during FY2010. To enhance offender performance in the community, the Pre-Release Program added the "Accepting Responsibility" video series to its curriculum in July 2010. This video series using evidence-based approaches will be used to enhance the cognitive aspect of the delivery of the existing Pre-Release curriculum by providing interactive opportunities for participants to practice decision making and take responsibility for their transition plan and re-entry into the community. In addition, Community Re-Entry Specialists continue to collaborate with county workforce centers. This includes meeting on a regular basis to discuss programming and collaborating on training (see Recommendations GP 17 and 23). DOC posted an RFP for Employment Subscription Database Services which will provide opportunities and job listings for in-state and out-of-state jobs. DOC is awaiting contract approval to link with *Connect Colorado* through the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. JobView, DOC's provider, has identified other links to access job postings that the Department will be looking into. Labor Market Information training for CDOC staff has been completed (see GP 23).

2009 ACTION/IMPLEMENTATION

In addition to the original recommendation, the Commission approved a new and distinct recommendation regarding employment and licensing barriers affecting people with criminal records. The new recommendation reads as follows:

2009 Recommendation BP52-A. The Commission recommends a review of all state promulgated statutes, rules, regulations and policies that create a barrier to employment or professional licensing for people with a criminal conviction. The Commission also recommends a review of written hiring policies and practices regarding people with a criminal conviction, for every state division and department. The Commission recommends interested members of the General Assembly request such a review and report from Legislative Council.

The Department of Corrections reports that this work is largely underway as a matter of current business practice. The Department of Corrections continues its long-term partnership with the Department of Labor and Employment and has established a statewide network of workforce centers.

New initiatives in response to this recommendation are also underway and are intended to be completed by the end of 2009. These include the development of a method to assess the skill levels of inmates with vocational needs, the use of labor market information to inform education and vocational training, and expanding its efforts with the community college system to enhance offender employment and training. It is also expanding its staff training in this area.

2009 IMPACT

Future Commission reports will include information on the number of offenders participating in DOC's prerelease programs and workforce centers, when available. Additional information, such as the outcome of labor market information on DOC vocation programming, will be included in future reports when available from DOC.

2009 BARRIERS

All stakeholders have not convened to address this recommendation. Data may be unavailable to determine the extent to which this recommendation is implemented.

Description

Because the research is conclusive that stable and meaningful employment is critical to recidivism reduction, the Department of Corrections should work with the Department of Labor and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, private businesses, trade unions, along with city, county, state and private employers to expand the number and scope of vocational programs offered in prison, and to ensure that the job skills offered by these programs are relevant and transferable to the current job market. Job placement and job readiness programs should be added in the Department of Corrections, and should be a priority for offenders approaching their release date. A focus on creating jobs for individuals coming from the Department of Corrections should be a priority for the collaborating entities.

Agencies Responsible

Department of Corrections, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Human Services

Discussion

Recidivism studies show that employed offenders are significantly more likely to remain crime-free when they return to the community. This recommendation would maximize the public safety value of time spent in prison by targeting what is arguably the most important barrier to successful re-entry. Complete implementation of this recommendation is consistent with the Commission's statutory mandate to "focus on evidence-based recidivism reduction initiatives..." [C.R.S. 16-11.3-103(1)].

