

Transitional Jobs Programs for Persons with Criminal Records

Transitional Jobs (TJ) is a rapidly developing and expanding strategy intended to help persons with criminal records and limited employment experience successfully return to the workforce and their communities. This is notable given that other less intensive reentry programs have not proven to be as successful with this population.

What are Transitional Jobs?

Transitional Jobs are time-limited, subsidized jobs that combine *real work, skill development, and support services* to help participants overcome substantial barriers to employment. They operate in rural, urban, and suburban areas of the country, engaging individuals who have a broad array of barriers to work.

Transitional Jobs placements are typically in public or nonprofit organizations. Workers **earn a wage** of between \$5.15 and \$8.00 per hour and work between 20 and 35 hours per week. The programs are time limited, typically offering two to six months of paid work experience, though some last as long as 12 months. As participants near the end of the transitional job, they receive assistance in looking for and obtaining unsubsidized employment and subsequent help with job retention.

Do Transitional Jobs work for persons with criminal records?

TJ participants have higher job retention rates than those in other programs because TJ participants learn how to be successful employees through job skills classes and real work experience. The results of

Transitional Jobs programs for persons with criminal records is consistent with general Transitional Jobs program success, in which 60 to 94 percent of graduates go on to unsubsidized employment at starting wages averaging \$8.00 to \$10.90 per hour. Currently, Transitional Jobs programs designed specifically for persons with criminal records have been or will be adopted in 10 states, the majority of which have the largest reentering populations in the nation. These TJ programs are being supported financially or otherwise by state-level corrections departments. Many more TJ programs serve persons with criminal records as part of other target populations, including recipients of welfare and people who are homeless.

Why do persons with criminal records benefit from Transitional Jobs?

Specifically, for persons with criminal records, Transitional Jobs programs:

- Increase stability during the immediate transition from incarceration into the community by providing cash income to help cover living expenses and by fostering a positive routine and realistic hope for moving into permanent employment;
- Allow time to get reestablished as productive members of the workforce while building a work history for their resumes;
- Provide an opportunity to prove key facets of employability such as reliability and trustworthiness, leading to strong references that are instrumental when seeking unsubsidized employment; and
- Offer linkages to community supports and help with managing time for

competing demands, such as parole officer meetings, finding housing, and re-establishing custody of children.

Workforce organizations, departments of corrections, and funders across the nation are seeking opportunities to add this critical TJ strategy to their prison reentry initiatives.

The following programs exclusively serve people with criminal records:

New York City: Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)

Mindy Tarlow
Executive Director
212-422-4430
mtarlow@ceoworks.org
www.ceoworks.org

Laura Brenden
Director of Business Development
212-422-4430
lbrenden@ceoworks.org
www.ceoworks.org

The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) provides job readiness and placement services to former inmates, probationers, and others under community supervision in New York City. CEO's TJ program is a work crew model. Each day, CEO sends a work crew of five to nine people to over 30 work sites.

CEO funding primarily comes from competitively bid criminal justice contracts at the city, state, and federal levels for work crew services. In addition, CEO receives support from several private foundations, among them the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the JEHT Foundation, and the Gimbel Foundation.

CEO serves over 2,000 people on parole each year. Of those, 9,000 participants have been placed in permanent unsubsidized jobs in the last 10 years. Within two to three weeks of program participation, 60 percent

of participants are connected with a job developer and placed in permanent jobs. CEO has placed participants in a Transitional Job with over 150 public and private sector employers. For CEO participants placed in permanent jobs, 30 percent returned to prison in three years; for those who held onto the job for six months, the three-year return rate was 13 percent.

Chicago: Roosevelt University and the Career Advancement Network (CAN)

Mark Kaufman
CEO, Career Advancement Network
708-386-6063
mkaufman1@earthlink.net

Michael J. Elliott
Executive Director
Dept. of Human and Community Renewal
Roosevelt University
312-281-3164
melliott@roosevelt.edu

The Career Advancement Network (CAN) serves females with criminal histories in Chicago. Recognizing that trauma such as domestic violence, substance abuse, and assault are often felt by women who were formally incarcerated, CAN combines an intensive therapeutic counseling program to promote behavior and lifestyle change, which supports success in the workforce. CAN's TJ program is an individual placement model that begins two months prior to release from prison by providing TJ placements in the hospitality industry and other service sectors.

The CAN program is funded through city funds from the Chicago Mayor's Office of Workforce Development and receives training and placement support from the National Hotel and Lodging Association.

CAN has served over 200 women since 2004, and of those, only five have recidivated back to prison. Seventy-eight percent of TJ completers are placed into

unsubsidized jobs. Seventy percent of those placed are still working in the job after 60 days and 50 percent are still working after 90 days.

Detroit: Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit

Joe Evans
Detroit Career Center Director
Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit
Phone: 313-964-3900 ext. 505
Fax: 313-964-3991
jevans@goodwilldetroit.org

Detroit's New Start Employment Program is a TJ program for probationers from the Wayne County, Michigan jail system. All participants are adult Detroit residents residing at the Elmhurst Residential Treatment Center, which specializes in substance abuse treatment. New Start's TJ program is a social enterprise model, which is a revenue-generating business that performs a service or creates a product as a means of funding the program, also allowing TJ participants to learn a variety of skills. New Start is a partnership between Wayne County Corrections and Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit Industrial Operations Work Center. The industrial plant is a Tier I parts assembly and packaging supplier for auto manufacturers and others.

The program is funded by grants from the Detroit Workforce Development Department and the Ford Motor Fund. New Start partners with the following organizations to provide supportive services and financial support: Wayne County Department of Children and Family Services, Elmhurst Home and Naomi's Nest (residential and outpatient treatment centers), and the Michigan Department of Corrections.

The New Start program was initiated in January 2001 and has enrolled over 429 male and female probationers and parolees in TJ. Sixty-four percent of TJ participants transitioned to permanent employment,

earning an average wage of \$9.40 an hour. Eighty-eight percent of participants are still employed in their unsubsidized job after three months.

Fort Wayne: Blue Jacket, Inc.

Anthony Hudson
Executive Director
260-744-1900
ahudson@bluejacketinc.org
www.bluejacketinc.org

Blue Jacket, Inc. (BJI) works with adult participants from most criminal justice agencies in Allen County and surrounding counties in Fort Wayne, Indiana. BJI's TJ program is a construction social enterprise with a thrift store to be added soon. The TJ construction project includes 125 hours of in-class construction training, 40 hours of paid employment at \$8.00 per hour for six months.

The following partners assist the vision of BJI by providing supportive services:

- NeighborWorks, Inc.
- Associated Builders and Contractors
- Allen County Community Corrections
- Indiana Dept. of Workforce Development
- Ivy Tech State College

Blue Jacket, Inc. began a pilot program in 2005 and began its present TJ program in March 2006. BJI currently employs 14 participants with plans to employ 30 by the end of 2006. Of the 14 participants, three are buying homes being remodeled or built by BJI. BJI has served over 100 persons with criminal records since its inception.

Other Examples of TJ programs serving persons with criminal records:

Transitional Work Corporation

Richard Greenwald
Philadelphia, PA
215-965-3000 ext. 379
rcg@transitionalwork.org

Workforce, Inc

Greg Keesling
Indianapolis, Indiana
317-532-1368
gkeesling@work-force-inc.com

Goodwill Industries of San Francisco

Steven Currie
San Francisco, California
415-575-2122
scurrie@sfgoodwill.org

Advancement Plus

Jan Mueller
Lifetrack Resources
Minneapolis, MN
651-227-0621
janm@lifetrackresources.org

Sweet Beginnings

Brenda Palms-Barber
Chicago, IL
773-638-1805
Brenda@nlen.org

For more information about the Transitional Jobs strategy, please visit our website at www.transitionaljobs.net.

The National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN) is a coalition of more than 200 Transitional Jobs (TJ) programs, policy organizations, and sponsoring organizations. TJ is a workforce strategy designed to overcome employment obstacles by using time-limited, wage-paying jobs and combining real work, skill development, and supportive services to transition participants successfully into the labor market. The Network works to influence a number of audiences to ensure that policies will account for the hard-to-employ, that the public understands the need to invest in these services, that programs are able to effectively serve as many individuals as possible, and that best practices and technical assistance are widely shared and implemented throughout the network. The NTJN is made possible through the generous support of The Joyce Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Network members.

The mission of the National Transitional Jobs Network is to support and expand the size, type, and number of Transitional Jobs programs nationwide and to support the quality of the service model.

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For more information, visit www.transitionaljobs.net or contact Melissa Young.

4411 North Ravenswood • Chicago, Illinois 60640 • P 773 336 6086 • F 773 336 4907 • myoung@heartlandalliance.org

