

## Overview of the Target Population

- There were 250,840 booked into jail in Washington State in 2008 (<http://www.waspc.org/index.php>)
- Most people who are sentenced with a conviction do not go to prison but may go to jail for less than 1 year and/or be released to "community supervision."
- Most jails are at capacity and many pass through the jail system multiple times before reaching prison.
- 50% of offenders reported being unemployed or under employed at the time of arrest.
- 80% of offenders on community supervision were unemployed when they committed a re-offense.
- With the passage of **Senate Bill 6157** many offenders release to the county of their original or first offense requiring them to return to areas where there are little or no resources or support.
- Due to a conviction many are disqualified from working certain professions which reduces the employment opportunities available them. <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/msa/bccu/BCCU-crimesList.htm>
- Many people coming out of correctional facilities expect to be treated as a number, distrust the system and may look for validation of their suspicions.
- WorkSource offices have seen a 69% increase in the number of offenders seeking employment services with over 2300 a month receiving staff assisted services

## Background

In July 2009 the Offender Employment Services (OES) program underwent a major reorganization due to significant reductions in our annual Department of Corrections (DOC) contract. This came as a result of statewide budget cuts due to the economic downturn effecting Washington State and directly impacting DOC funding levels.

In July 2009, DOC contracted with Employment Security Department (ESD) for limited pre-employment services to be delivered inside DOC institutions. To continue providing specialized services to offenders in the community, ESD made the decision to assign the OES staff to WorkSource offices. This move allowed ESD to integrate services, maximize the cross-training opportunities for staff and still maintain contract obligations within the institutions.

ESD was able to retain 12.65 staff in 12 WorkSource offices statewide plus a minimum central office OES support team. OES staff now split their time between local WorkSource offices and DOC institutions providing services both in the institutions and the community to address offender barriers to re-entry, training, employment, and retention.

## Status

In the last year, WorkSource offices have seen a 69% increase in the number of offenders seeking employment services with over 2300 a month receiving staff assisted services. In order for OES to assist WorkSource staff with the increasing demand and provide consistent quality services to offenders, training is being provided to WorkSource offices that don't have dedicated OES staff to better serve offenders. The OES facilitated staff training will increase the overall number of services provided to OES customers through all WorkSource offices. OES training and technical assistance is essential in equipping staff and partners to better serve this population. The training includes:

- Targeted interventions to assist WorkSource staff to identify and effectively serve offender customers;
- Reentry Orientation and Reentry Job Club for continuous engagement for wage and career progression;
- Child Support workshop in a partnership with the Division of Child Support to engage all customers with child support issues to address the underground economy and help customers obtain legal paying jobs to support their children.

## Carl D. Perkins

ESD/OES manages 1% of the Carl D. Perkins State Leadership Funds provided by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. These funds assist start up programs and projects or expand existing programs that work with incarcerated individuals to provide Career Technical Education to prepare them for employment in high skills, high wage and demand occupations. This year OES has four contracts in place that are projected to serve 781 participants:

- *WorkForce Central Construction Connection* will serve 40 Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration youth in a modified pre-apprenticeship under the umbrella of School to Apprenticeship with 12 projected to become employed.
- *South Seattle Community College* will serve 61 adults with a short-term certificate program in Distribution and Retail Skills, a pre-apprenticeship program or into a long-term professional and technical education program. 20 participants are projected to obtain employment.
- *DOC Correctional Industries and the Jail Industries Board – Jail and Prison Industries Workforce Development Project* will provide Work Readiness certificate training to 480 inmates to achieve “soft skills” and technical skills. An additional pilot project at the Kitsap County jail will provide Hazmat and Hazwopper certifications to 10 inmates.
- *Goodwill Industries of the Inland Northwest* will provide pre-employment and career skills services to 200 individuals and 30 participants will enter state accredited certificate or educational track training programs. 20 participants are projected to obtain employment with 30-day retention.

All of the Carl D. Perkins programs and OES DOC program participants as well as WorkSource participants with conviction histories are entered into the ESD data base to measure the value of the interventions and services provided for future strategic planning

## Tools

- OES manages the **Washington State Fidelity Bond** which can be used as an employer incentive to place an individual with barriers into employment. The bonds are free to the employer and the job candidate for 6 months and require only a 1 page document. <http://www.wa.gov/esd/oes/bond/default.htm>
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) provides employers up to \$2400 in tax credits for eligible job candidates. <http://www.esd.wa.gov/hireanemployee/resources/taxcredits/index.php>
- Washington State Patrol (WATCH) website provides access to background checks for \$10 on-line or \$17 in person and can be notarized for an additional \$5. The best practice is to obtain the criminal history to verify accuracy and make available for the employer interview. <http://www.wsp.wa.gov/crime/crimhist.htm>
- Go2WorkSource is “one-stop” shopping to find employment as well as link to comprehensive resources for training programs, research careers, find labor market information, obtain employer and employment information and find WorkSource offices. <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/worksource/Employment.aspx>
- Apprenticeship Programs are seeking individuals interested in entering the skilled trades and the demand is great. With basic preparation individuals with conviction histories can enter the trades which are focusing on “Green Jobs.” <http://www.lni.wa.gov/TradesLicensing/Apprenticeship/Become/default.asp>
- A valuable resource to research and implement a plan is the “Where Are You Going” workbook provided by the WTECB at <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/documents/2008-10careerguidewebview.pdf>
- Individuals with certain criminal histories who have satisfied their supervision and discharged their conviction may be eligible to vacate their criminal history. <http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/WA/index.cfm>

Many more resources, services and links to contacts and additional information to support reentry efforts can be found on the Offender Employment Services website at [www.wa.gov/esd/oes](http://www.wa.gov/esd/oes) or by calling 1-800-339-3981.