

Event: California Future of Work Commission Listening Session: Justice-Involved Worker Service Providers

Date / Location: 26 March 2020 / Webinar / 10:00a – 12:00p

FWC Commissioners Attending: Carla Javits

G.O. / LWDA Staff Attending: Myke Griseta

Discussion Summary:

Barriers to Employment and Demand for Additional Services

- Resource gap in services for this population was highlighted by the available Prison to Employment Initiative funding (\$34M) and the amount of funding requested by applicants (\$56M).
- Need to identify more fair chance employers and work with employers to develop more fair chance-friendly background check policies
 - Lack of employers willing to use fair chance hiring practices is a limiting factor in job placements
 - AB 2054 (Ban the Box) was a first step in expanding first-chance hiring
- Building self- and external perceptions of justice-involved people as workers, removing the stigma of convictions
- Housing affordability/instability are major barriers to employment for justice-involved workers.
- Need for more training around basic life skills (e.g. passing a driving test)
- FCC Lifeline program (“Obama phones”) lacks data and functionality needed in current era of online communication.
- More trauma informed therapy is needed.

Program Models

- Coding Bootcamp model gives participants a working knowledge of current technology, has shown promise in recidivism reduction (Last Mile program cites a 0% recidivism rate).
- Oregon in-prison online learning model: provides opportunities for incarcerated people to earn a B.A. and M.A.; security measures to mitigate concerns associated with in-prison internet access.
- Second Chance Bootcamp: succeeded in moving workers into union jobs and CalFire firefighter pipeline
- Co-location of services at AJCCs and co-enrollment in WIOA has shown success.
- Training simulators offer a promising model for career readiness.
- Organizational development of a pedagogy for coaching justice-involved workers and job seekers

Policy Recommendations

- “Reentry should begin upon entry”
 - Currently incarcerated people should be trained for jobs that will result from automation, not for jobs that will be lost due to automation
 - Criminal justice system should expand mechanisms to ensure career readiness and documentation needed to work are secured by the time someone is released
- Modular housing: formerly incarcerated workers can benefit both on the supply side (construction and manufacturing jobs) and demand side (affordable, stable housing for justice-involved people)
- Justice system sharing criminogenic needs assessment with workforce-side case managers would help workforce professionals better understand and serve justice-involved clients.
- Incentivizing private sector to upskill formerly incarcerated workers (e.g. tax breaks, public-private partnerships)
- Inclusion of formerly incarcerated people on workforce boards
- Increased state funding for OTJ/vocational training
- Equity dashboard
- Job readiness certifications

COVID-19 Impact

- Jobs in which formerly incarcerated workers have typically been trained to work have been shown to be front-line jobs that are vital to our economy in a time of crisis.
- Fear that justice-involved job seekers may be overlooked during current climate of economic insecurity
- Important that workers have access to stable technological infrastructure that is affordable enough to accommodate training
- Current moment highlights need to prepare workers with digital literacy to work in new world of work
- Economic uncertainty has demonstrated the need for extended and expanded benefits.