

# **The Role Of Families In Employment & Retention When Working With The Formerly Incarcerated**

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Presented In Collaboration

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- Over 75 years of experience providing services to people impacted by incarceration & their families
- Holistic service approach addressing complex barriers to employment, including family relationships, addiction & reentry
- Over 30 years of experience assisting formerly incarcerated people to transition into the workforce

**Osborne Association**



- Over 600,000 people are released from incarceration each year
- Most people released from prison or jail are parents:
  - Fathers account for 90% of incarcerated parents
  - Almost 80% of women incarcerated reported being the mother of a child
- Over 23,000 people return to NYC every year from incarceration
- Midyear 2008 Prison population – 4,777 black male inmates & 1,760 Hispanic male inmates per 100,000 males respectively (727 white males per 100,000 respectively)

## Interesting Facts



# When You Think of the Formerly Incarcerated.... ???



- Lazy
- Absent
- Deadbeat dads
- Deserving of blame
- Likely to recidivate
- Lack skills
- "Hard to place & retain in employment"

## **Common Views About The Formerly Incarcerated**



- “I don’t want to go back”
- “I don’t want to be a burden”
- “Employment Only” mindset
- Immediate gratification vs. delayed gratification
- Unrealistic reentry expectations

## **Common Views Amongst the Formerly Incarcerated**



- Unemployment/ Underemployment
- Stigma of a criminal record
- Time away from the labor market
- Child support
- Strained family ties

## **Barriers Faced By Formerly Incarcerated People**



- Code of Silence
- Stigma by association
- Often perceived as part of the problem, not the solution
- Broken Families
- Loss of Income

## **Impacts of Incarceration on Families**



- Provide critical supports for transformation and successful reentry
- Strong motivating factors exist:
  - Potential for mending strained relationships
  - Children
- Extended networks
- Constant presence

**Family Strengths &  
Resources They Provide**



## Program Goals

- Employment at a livable wage & career advancement
- Responsibility for financial needs of children & families
- Improved family relationships
- Decreased Recidivism

**Osborne's Employment &  
Training Services**



- Family/Reentry-oriented approach
- Comprehensive Case Management
  - Risk Assessments
  - Family Functioning Assessments
  - Vocational Assessments
  - Service planning and referrals
  - Ongoing supports for 1 year Constant presence

## **Core Program Components**



- Workplace Readiness
  - The Role of Family in Employment
  - Child Support 101
  - Access NYC
  - Job Preparedness
  - Financial Literacy
  - Breaking Barriers Cognitive Intervention Model
- Leadership & Career Development Nights

## **Core Program Components**



- Poor family relationship
- Disconnected from his children
- Unable to contribute financially
- Barriers to employment due to criminal history
- Unclear career interests

## **Participant Profile: Mason**





- Employed as a Food Services Supervisor, earning \$15.00 p/hr (starting salary was \$8.00 p/hr)
- Entrusted to supervise a staff of 5 employees
- Actively engaged in his children's lives
- Consistent provider
- Stable housing
- Strong program connection

**Mason Today**



- 79% of parents employed after 6 months demonstrate improved and ongoing ties with their children and families
- Average wage of \$10.29 per hour
- 70% reduction in recidivism after 1 year from job placement
- Over 50% retention rate in employment after 6 months in employment

## Outcomes



- Formerly incarcerated people want to succeed but need tools
- Formerly Incarcerated people are family members also... are we acknowledging this?
- Is job placement enough? What other needs are there?
- Are we creating an environment where families feel welcomed & a part of the process?

## Things To Consider



- It's not about the money.... It's about making amends
- Families are the least expensive and most viable re-entry plan and support for people
- Family-oriented approach helps explore family strengths & supports
- Families should be brought into the process so they feel included, respected & so that ideas can be explored or challenged
- Opportunities for families to rejoice in participant's successes supports job continuity, education & career growth, & strengthens family ties

## **Lessons Learned**



- Assessment, Assessment, Assessment...
- Employment as a stand-alone service is not effective
- Partnerships are key

## Lessons Learned



Thank You!

