



California New Start – Prison-to-Employment Program

Preparing inmates for success and connecting them to the labor market

Background:

Holding a job is one of the best predictors of parole success. Numerous statistical studies demonstrate that a parolee who finds and maintains a steady job—and who also has stable housing and avoids substance abuse—is more likely to avoid subsequent offenses and to successfully complete his term on parole. Therefore, the link between in-prison rehabilitation programs and employment is critical.

The Public Safety and Offender Rehabilitation Services Act of 2007

In 2007, The Public Safety and Offender Rehabilitation Services Act of 2007 (Assembly Bill 900) was enacted to reform California's prison system by reducing prison overcrowding and increasing rehabilitative programming. Among its provisions, AB 900 required CDCR to develop an Inmate Treatment and Prison-to-Employment Plan. Developing a successful transition from prison to employment and expanding educational and vocational programs for inmates are a high priority of correctional system reform envisioned under AB 900. By focusing on the needs of offenders both in prison and as they transition back to the community, we bolster an offender's chance of success and reduce crime.

California New Start links offenders to jobs in the community

California New Start is designed to link offenders released from prison to jobs in their community and thereby reduce their chance of returning to a life of crime. In order to prepare inmates for this successful transition, California New Start also involves linking inmate rehabilitation programs to the labor market and jobs in the community. Inmate education, treatment and rehabilitation programs will provide skills to offenders that will most likely result in their employment. The design and components of California New Start are included in CDCR's March 2008 report to the Legislature, "Inmate Treatment and Prison to Employment Plan."

California New Start is modeled after what works in other states, particularly Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders), which has operated successfully in Texas for many years. It is built around four components:

California New Start

- In-prison vocational training,
- In-prison employment skills and development of documents needed to secure a job,
- Post-prison employment placement services, and
- Monitoring and evaluating results.

Matching inmate training programs to labor market demands

CDCR is making strenuous efforts to link inmate training programs to jobs in the community. Training programs without the potential for employment will be discontinued or realigned to match current and emerging job opportunities in California's labor market. Key elements of this effort include:

- Created a database by institution of jobs in the counties to which inmates parole to identify local demand for jobs available for released inmates;
- Matching existing training and work opportunities in prison to jobs available in communities;
- Continuing, modifying, discontinuing and/or establishing new employment training and work opportunities within prison that match future job availability in communities; and
- Reassessing available work opportunities in prison to ensure that important and transferable job skills are learned.

Providing documents needed to speed up employment upon release

Upon release, offenders need key documents and job seeking skills in order to secure employment as rapidly as possible and strengthen their chance of success. This effort includes:

- Providing individual documents needed to secure employment prior to release from prison (e.g., State identification, Social Security card, birth certificate, Selective Service registration, etc.);
- Providing essential job prerequisites such as resumes, trade certificates, licenses, trade union membership, etc; and,
- Providing support to seek, secure and maintain employment through a collaborative partnership with the California Workforce Investment Board, local Workforce Investment Boards, and One-Stop Centers around the state to establish the direct connection to employment for offenders returning to their home communities.

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Evidence-based rehabilitation reform

California's prison-to-employment program is based on evidence-based principles being incorporated into California's new rehabilitation model – the California Logic Model, a detailed sequential description of how California will apply evidence-based principles and practices to effectively deliver a core set of effective, evidence-based rehabilitation programs. Key elements include:

- Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS) tool – a research-based tool that identifies the risk to re-offend and the criminogenic needs of each offender.
- Case management process that uses COMPAS results to match the right offender to the right program in the right order; and to ensure continuity of rehabilitation programs between the prison, parole system, and other community-based providers.

Partnership with California Workforce Investment Board to find jobs for parolees

- CDCR entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency in May 2008, to develop and implement a plan that would help place parolees in available jobs.
- CDCR is entering an Interagency Agreement with the California Workforce Investment Board (CWIB) to fund local WIB one-stop employment services for parolees.

Community Stakeholder (Employer) Forums

The CDCR and the California Workforce Investment Board (CWIB) have held community stakeholder forums around the state. The purpose of the forums is to:

- Help identify employers willing to hire parolees;
- Create a statewide list of employers willing to hire parolees; and,
- Identify barriers or disincentives to employment and/or employment incentives.

Forums were held in San Bernardino County in September 2007; Sacramento County in March 2008 and February 2009; San Joaquin County in May 2008; San Diego County in April and May 2008; and a North Central Counties Consortium in June 2008. Presentations were also made to the statewide CWIB convention in March 2008 and to representatives of Los Angeles County in December 2008. Employer Forums will be an ongoing component of California New Start.

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Expert Panel and Governor's Rehabilitation Strike Team

The design and implementation of California New Start is based on recommendations of the Expert Panel on Adult Offender Recidivism Reduction Programming (June 2007) and the Governor's Rehabilitation Strike Team (Strike Team) final report (December 2007). The Strike Team recommended that CDCR work closely with the Labor and Workforce Development Agency to build upon and use the existing employment infrastructure of the California Workforce Investment Board, the 49 local Workforce Investment Boards, and the more than 200 "One-Stop Centers" around the state.

Sources:

"Meeting the Challenges of Rehabilitation in California's Prison and Parole System," Governor's Rehabilitation Strike Team, December 2007.

"Inmate Treatment and Prison to Employment Plan," Legislative Report, March 2008.

"Progress Report on Rehabilitative Programming" to the California Rehabilitation Oversight Board (C-ROB), CDCR, June 2008.

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