Welcome Home: Building Evidence-Based Services for the Reentry Population

Houston · November 8, 2018
Agenda

Presentation

- Mary McDougall, Executive Director
  Operation ABLE, Detroit

- Pauline Sylvain-Lewis, Director of Economic
  Advancement & Financial Opportunity
  North Lawndale Employment Network, Chicago

Activity

- Small table activity
- Large group share-out

Close

- Key takeaways and next steps
Operation ABLE of Michigan

Culinary Arts Program

Part 1 – Inside the correctional facility

Part 2 – Option to continue after release
Participants Served

- All men, ranging in age from early twenties to mid sixties
- Some were on parole but most on probation
- All types of offenses
- Length of incarceration ranged from a few months to 40 years
Inside Correctional Facility

- Trained 123 men over a 20-month period
- 5 nights a week for 3-4 hours (4 weeks per cohort) – lots of kitchen time
- Earned ServSafe Food Handlers Certificate
- Students prepared a meal on final day with guests from the prison, the Mayor’s office and guests from local restaurants
Invited to Finish Course on Outside

- Some came to complete course
- Some came as part of a work experience program
- Some came to get help in general
- Some came for encouragement
What We Learned: Serving Returning Citizens

• **Understand the stress of “supervision”:** The challenge of probation and parole – often harder than prison!

• **Design for Specific Needs:** Re-entry clients are just like our other clients, yet there are specific differences that require program tailoring

• **Mental Health and Wraparound Supports:** Counseling and supportive resources are vital

• **Both Housing and a Job:** A job and a place to live offer hope and stability

• **Retention matters:** It is not so much about getting a job, but keeping a job
What We Learned: Staff Cultural Competency

Participants deserve from staff:

• Respect
• Honest feedback
• Structure and continuity
• Hope for a better future
• Connections to resources – housing, recovery, legal, etc
• Support group / Ongoing counseling
• Someone trustworthy to talk to
• Soft skill training
What We Learned – Agency Infrastructure

• Agency-wide **commitment** to the population and to learning how to be effective

• Select training in an industry **friendly** to those with a record

• **Resources**, including funds for training curriculum, exams, and needs-related assistance (transportation, incentives, stipends/wages)

• Recognition that success can be **intermittent and individualized**

• Community **linkages** to training partners, service providers, and employers: for participants and staff support!
North Lawndale Employment Network

Paid Work Experience and TDL Training
Participants served

• Recently released individuals (within 6 months) or currently on parole or probation

• All types of offenses except sexual offenses

• Length of incarceration ranged from a few months to decades
Deep & Wide Referral Partnerships

• Partner with correctional facilities
• Build relationships with Parole and Probation
• Engage residential reentry centers/halfway houses
• Partner with other agencies serving returning citizens
Reentry-Specific Program Design

- Risk Needs Assessment and then Career Action Plan
- Individualized next steps: social enterprise and/or TDL training
- Incentives for goal attainment
- Tailored financial coaching: child support, debt, fees, legal, etc
- Long term job retention support, 1+ year
Tailored Approach: Social Enterprise and/or TDL Training

On-the-Job Training

• Half day contextualized literacy

• Half day paid work experience at NLEN’s social enterprise, Sweet Beginnings

• Tailored financial coaching

Occupational Training

• In-house TDL training

• Graduation celebrations, lunches, other communal activities

• Employer Engagement and targeted, 1+ year long retention services
What We Learned: Serving Returning Citizens

- **Risk Needs Assessment and Career Planning:** Understanding “risk needs responsivity” can better inform career and education planning.

- **Cash helps, but not only cash:** Incentivize with stipends/wages but also supplement with other non-monetary incentives to motivate towards goal attainment.

- **On-The-Job Training:** Some reentry participants need to practice skills and earning income in work setting (and make mistakes in supportive environment).

- **Long term job retention supports:** Engage with graduate at workplace milestones and in between, at least 1+ year post-placement.
What We Learned: Agency Infrastructure

• **Relentless referral partnerships:** Partnering with justice networks means strong pipeline of candidates, and building relationships with Parole and Probation helps participants feel supported

• **Contextualized literacy and strong occupational training:** Building in contextualized education improves skills and career opportunities

• **Tailored financial and job retention coaching:** Address specific acute and long-term financial and employment needs of returning citizens

• **Social Enterprise:** Requires significant investment but returns are high
Designing for Returning Citizens

• What do you currently offer?

• How can you remove barrier for participants accessing your program and services?

• What tweaks could you make to your program, services, or infrastructure to make it a better fit for the reentry population?
Thank you!