

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Video

Jeremy Travis
Senior Fellow
Urban Institute

Audio

“If inmates participate in education programs while they are in prison, they will have better success in getting jobs and they will have lower recidivism rates when they get out of prison. It’s ironic, given that research base, that our country has been cutting back on prison-based education programs.”

State Senator Donald Redfern
Vice-Chair, Judiciary Committee (R,IA)

“It’s the same with jobs. In particular, we will be attacked by Labor if you bring a company, bring jobs into a prison. Typically, the reason they are in there is because they are going to be a little lower paying. And they look at unfair competition. Those are legitimate complaints, but in the end, I think you have to have education available in prisons. You have to offer those opportunities to be ready and trained to go out into the world. And I think you have to have jobs there, too. So, I am a proponent of both of those. Recognizing that there are political problems that go along with it, and a number of people that oppose them, and I understand that. Those are certainly legitimate complaints. But I think, in the end, you have to find a way to do it.”

PROJECT RIO

(Reintegration of Offenders)
San Antonio, TX

Joan Goodwin
Program Specialist
Project RIO

“I had some marketable skills and I had had some good jobs. I got into some good interviews, really good. Everything would be going really well and I’d be thinking, ‘All right, I got this one. I know I got it.’ And then I’d get to the part that I had to say. ‘Well, I think you need to know that I’m on parole and I live in a halfway house.’ And you could almost see this wall go up. ‘Thank you, Miss Goodwin, we’ll call you.’ That went on day after day after day.”

B-roll of Joan driving
and walking into the center

V.O.#1

Joan Goodwin never dreamed when she walked out of prison 17 years ago that she’d be working for the State of Texas in a program called Project RIO. Project RIO is operated through the Texas Workforce Commission and provides services to 16,000 parolees every year. Initially started to reduce skyrocketing corrections costs by reducing the numbers of released prisoners that are returned to prison, Project RIO begins working with offenders before they are released.

John Ownby
Program Administrator
Project RIO

“It’s very important that people are equipped with the right attitudes, the right skills, the right background prior to release. So, once they’re released and they come into our career centers, where our workforce development Project RIO specialists work with them, the job is much easier for us to accomplish.”

B-roll of *Behind the Walls* classes

V.O.#2

Project RIO *Behind the Walls* works in collaboration with the Windham School District and the Texas Youth Commission, providing links among education, training, and employment during incarceration.

Bob McAdams
Principal
Travis County State Jail

“We served about 80,000 offenders last year through our school district, so we are fairly large and kind of a best-kept secret in the state. It’s a lot less expensive to educate than it is to incarcerate. If we can teach them to read and write, if we can raise reading levels and basic literacy levels for offenders, even if they don’t get their GED, and then, if we can try to teach a trade, a vocation, something where they can make a living, we’re going to cut the recidivism rate considerably.”

Kenneth Carl, Jr.
Senior Warden
Travis County State Jail

“Anything we can do differently, we believe we should try, because if it doesn’t work well, at least we learned that and we can move on to something else. But education programs, especially treatment along with education, the statistics show they make a higher success rate. So, if we’re going to do what we’re entrusted to do by the taxpayers, this is what we should be doing, making a difference.”

John Ownby

“Through Project RIO in the free world, we offer things like employment counseling, employment referral, free fidelity bonding, tax credits to employers who will consider our ex-offenders. It’s a fairly comprehensive undertaking and it’s enjoyed considerable success over the 17 years it’s been in existence.”

Kimberly Hofner
Project RIO Client

“I came out. I had never been in trouble before and came from a good family. There are a lot of women that I met in there that have very similar circumstances. I know that being a felon, it’s so hard to find employment. And what if this wasn’t in place? What if it wasn’t there? What would be the consequence of that? And I would say that there probably would be a lot of negativity, and somebody wouldn’t have hope. This gives hope.”

Joan Goodwin “One of the neat things about Project RIO is that any time one of the staff, the Project Rio staff, sends a client out on an interview, that employer already knows ahead of time that they have a felony history. The client knows that the employer knows so it makes the interview process a whole lot easier.”

Ana Estrada
Job Specialist, Project Rio “We bring people in here. We assist them in every way possible to get back into the workforce. We help them with bus transportation, by helping with bus vouchers, getting to different places. We give them referrals if they don’t have clothing, or they need legal aid assistance, counseling, medical, or dental. We give them referrals, places that they can go to where they will be helped, even knowing that they have a past felony conviction.”

John Ownby “The state legislature has reviewed Project RIO operations and found that there’s actually a positive cash flow on the expenditures that they make. In 1992, there was an evaluation performed by Texas A&M University. They found that, at that point in time, the four million that was expended on program operations actually returned ten million dollars to the coffers of the state government by virtue of lower re-incarceration costs. So, it’s a money maker from that perspective.”

B-roll V.O.#3
“The 1992 study also identified a 15 percent recidivism differential between RIO participants and non-RIO participants.”

John Ownby “During the last year, 77 percent of all Project RIO participants in the free world successfully secured employment. That’s a statistic that we’re quite proud of.”

Kim Hofner “Some people may come out and they may not use this. They may not see it as an opportunity. But there’s going to be plenty of others, like myself, who are going to see this and grab hold of it. They’ll run with it with everything they’ve got, because you can make it.”

Ellen Halbert
Victim's Witness Division
Austin District Attorney's Office

"From the victim's point of view, the best thing that we can do in the system – for victims and for public safety – is have the best reentry programs we can possibly have. It is ridiculous for us to believe that if an offender gets out of prison, and he can't find a job, and he can't find a place to live, no one wants him in their community, that he is going to remain crime-free. What is he going to do? People say, well, tell him to go to another community. But the other community is the same way. So, I think we need meaningful training for offenders before they get out and meaningful connections for them to make when they get out of prison."

SAFER FOUNDATION
Chicago, IL

Video

Jeffrey Stevens
Safer client

Audio

"I had a family that was involved with drugs. Growing up, you know what I'm saying, I just adapted to their lifestyle doing the same things they did. I started selling and then turned to using and this was the end. Right here, every time, it's the only thing that I accomplished."

B-roll

V.O.#1

Jeffrey Stevens is a resident at the North Lawndale Adult Transition Center, which receives inmates from the Illinois Department of Correction to serve out the last months of their sentences. The Center is one of two secured residential sites run by the Safer Foundation, originally established in 1972 to provide vocational training to inmates. One of the country's largest community-based providers of employment services for former prisoners, Safer has programs in six locations in Illinois and Iowa, and has placed over 40,000 clients in jobs.

Diane Williams
President
Safer Foundation

"We have people who come through here who desperately want to have a job the day they walk in here. They believe that that's going to solve every issue that they have. And the truth of the matter is, there is no single intervention that will solve every issue that they have. Employment is certainly a key component. Education is a component. Family reunification is a component. Shifting and transitioning, if you will, from an institutional mentality to a community mentality is a need when they walk out the door. There is a need to actually have bodies and names and faces in

that community that they can talk to and work with. So, there's a whole series of interventions that are necessary."

B-roll

V.O.#2

Commander Starks oversees the 11th District, Area 4 of the Chicago Police Department. The West Side community of Chicago has seen 3,000 people released from prison over a three-year period.

Dana Starks, Commander
11th District, Area 4
Chicago Police Department

"The work that the Safer Foundation does is critical, with the large number of ex-offenders that reside here in the 11th District. You can understand how this large number of ex-offenders can affect the quality of life in the community of the 11th District. The services that the Safer Foundation provides help to make these ex-offenders productive and positive citizens and keeps them from being recidivists. There's no doubt about it that the Safer Foundation plays an integral part."

B-roll

V.O.#3

The Adult Transition Center was developed through a partnership between the Safer Foundation and the Illinois Department of Corrections to transition some of the folks coming back into the community.

Debra Higgins
Chief of Security
North Lawndale Adult Transition Center

"When men come in on intake, the first thing we do is ask them who doesn't have a high school diploma or their GED. If they're going to be here anything over six months, they have to go to school."

Dwayne Daniel
Adult Education Specialist

"Two years ago, you would get guys coming in at a sixth or seventh grade level. You're getting a majority of the guys coming in now at third and fourth grade levels academically. If you supply people with services such as employment and education, housing, and things like that, and if you empower them, then they're less likely to be dependent on the criminal subculture and more likely to be law-abiding citizens.

Diane Williams

"The core of what we do, in terms of service provision, is employment. Quite frankly, we got into everything else that we do because of employment. We make every effort to help our clients learn how to find jobs themselves. We also make direct contacts with employers or potential employers."

Jeffrey Stevens

"They sent me to school. I didn't want to go, you know what I'm saying, because I'm 39 years old. These people are going to

make me go to school. I need to get a job. But they were like, no, man, go to school. Once I got into the class, the teacher was so willing to help me, I just got what I could get out of it. Then, at the end, she sent me out and I got a job.”

B-roll

V.O.#4

Jeffrey works at the Morse Automotive Corporation where he makes brakes for cars. The company has been hiring clients from Safer for the last five years.

Diane Williams

Loyola University did a study. When they looked at our clients who specifically went through our employment programs, 17 percent of the clients recidivated. That was in comparison to 44 percent of those released from the state during the same period of time. That was a three-year look.”

B-roll

V.O.#5

Safer also recognized the need to make job coaches available to their clients, after they were hired, to focus on retention.

David Disabato
Job Coach

“A month into their employment, I start contacting them and finding out how the job was going for them. Are there any issues they want to talk about or discuss?”

B-roll

V.O.#6

David is a job coach who empathizes with the Safer clients because he’s been where they are. About 15 percent of Safer employees were formerly incarcerated.

David Disabato

“I came through the program in 1992. I finished my college degree about a year after I was released from work release, which is now the adult transition center. I did an internship here and was hired before the final month of my school year. I’ve been here now going on eight years.”

Diane Williams

“Ninety-seven percent of the people who go into prison are coming home. We, as a community, have a choice. We can say come home worse than you went in and do what you have to do to survive. Or we can say, we will not feed you, but we will provide you with support systems that will help you to help yourself. That’s really what we like to do.”

CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
New York, NY

Video

Audio

CEO office

V.O.#1

The Center for Employment Opportunities, or CEO, started out as a demonstration project of the Vera Institute of Justice in the late 1970's, to respond to problems individuals leaving prison were having finding employment. They serve around 1800 non-violent former prisoners a year.

Mindy Tarlow
Executive Director
Center for Employment Opportunities

"The first thing that happens when a client comes home is we run an intensive four-day pre-employment training program. Clients go over interview skills, practice explaining their convictions, fill out job applications, assess their own skills and interests, and work with each other going through mock interviews."

Work Site B-roll

V.O.#2

After the pre-employment training program and within a week after being released from prison, a client is assigned to CEO's Signature Program, The Neighborhood Work Project. They work at one of the many transitional work sites, providing maintenance and repair work for government and municipal institutions. They are paid minimum wage and they get paid at the end of each day."

Herbert Smith
CEO Client

"I would say it's an excellent idea. Guys coming home need all the help they can get, especially if they don't have a place to stay and if they don't have a skill. I probably could have been working in some place that I didn't like. But I wouldn't have stayed there. So, I would rather do this in the meantime until I find something pertaining to my own profession."

Mindy Tarlow

"Individuals work in transitional employment four out of five days a week. One day a week they return to CEO to work with a job coach and a job developer. They help them build the basic work skills that they need to be successful on the job. They also set up interviews with an employer whose job demands match the skills and interests of our client."

Fred Reickelt, Director
Pre-Employment Services

"It's not easy helping guys find jobs. Yet, these guys that we work with, guys and women, they're so motivated. They're so eager to prove their own abilities and skills. All they need is a chance. I think that's the one thing that we've truly asked the employers, to give that person a shot."

Siebert Nicholas Printing

V.O.#3

CEO has placed workers in over 300 area businesses and organizations. The Siebert Nicholas Printing Group is an employer that has an eight-year relationship with CEO, hiring and promoting a number of its clients.

Christopher Swanson
Siebert Nicholas Printing

“When they come to me, they have a general idea of what they’re going to be doing. Then I get more into the specifics of it and ask if they’re willing and able to try. We usually have a two-week trial during which either one of us, the employer or the potential employee, can change his mind. And after that, it’s usually pretty successful.”

B-roll

V.O.#4

After serving five years in prison, Barry Davis went to CEO and was hired by the Siebert Printing Group as a messenger and porter. In four and a half years, he’s moved up to a union position in the pressroom.

Barry Davis
CEO client

“Siebert is a good company to work for because they don’t really hold what you did against you. If you have a good work ethic, you’ll be all right. So they are both good to me.”

V.O.#5

CEO reports placing 65 to 70 percent of its graduates in full-time jobs in three months. Of those, about three-quarters were still working after one month and 60 percent were still on the job after three months.

Mindy Tarlow

“Many government funding sources support CEO, including virtually every state and local criminal justice agency. We also have an increasing number of funding sources from the labor side of the government ledger. We receive workforce money, that’s federal money, which passes through the city. One of the things that makes CEO’s financial structure so unique is that this big transitional employment program that we operate is 90 percent supported by the revenue that we receive from those agencies for which we perform the work. This allows us to run a several million dollar transitional jobs network with only having to actually get 10 percent or less of the cost of doing so. Our ultimate goal is for the cost to be neutral.”

Dennis with Client

V.O.#6

About one third of CEO’s staff are individuals with a criminal history. About half of them came through the program.

Dennis Knight
Job Coach

“Well, I wanted to work for CEO because they have opportunities to help people in the criminal justice system. Some people, when they come out, would have a hard time getting employment. So I

saw that as very positive. For myself, going through a similar situation in my life, I knew this program was helpful for me.”

Mindy Tarlow

“The cost of being in prison, the cost to families and communities, is actually quite high. If an individual has a job, they’re significantly less likely to be re-offending and, therefore, consistently less likely to return to prison. When fiscal times are tough, I think that there’s an increasing desire to reduce the amount of money and capacity that governments pour into jail and prison systems. And we’re one alternative to that.”

Institute for Social and Economic Development
Coralville, IA

Video

Audio

B-roll of Classroom
In ICIW

V.O.#1

These women are inmates at the Iowa Correctional Institute for Women. They are participating in an innovative program called *Pathways to Progress* that intends to provide them with the skills and tools to be entrepreneurs after they are released.

Christine Mollenkopf-Pigsley
Director of Microenterprise
Institute for Social and Economic Development

“As part of our Women’s Business Center, in 2000, we started a project called *Pathways to Progress*, which is a microenterprise program for incarcerated women. It follows them from a training program while they are inside the facility, to a reentry project as they leave the prison and begin to implement the business plan that they developed in prison. They implement it incrementally as they reenter the community with the hopes that some day, it will provide a full-time income for them once they’ve completed their parole and obligations to the correctional system.”

B-roll

V.O.#2

The *Pathways to Progress* program is a collaboration among the Iowa Department of Corrections, the Iowa Women’s Enterprise Center, and ISED, the Institute for Social and Economic Development, a leader in microenterprising. It is completely funded through grants from the Ms. Foundation and the U.S. Small Business Administration’s Office of Women’s Business Ownership. It receives in-kind support from the Iowa Department of Corrections.

Diann Wilder-Tomlinson
Warden
Iowa Correctional Institute for Women

“Women, in particular, come to prison and are relatively marginalized. They’re either at poverty level or below the poverty level when they come in here. A lot of times, they’ve committed their offenses because of that need and an association that they probably didn’t need. I felt that this was a reentry opportunity through which we could possibly provide them with skills and the ability to support themselves.”

Jeanette Bucklew
Deputy Director, Western Region
Iowa Department of Corrections

“It is a program that is focused on teaching women all of the skills that would be necessary to have microenterprise businesses, when they return to the community, which could supplement and help them with income needs. Women have so many skills that they could do small business endeavors out of their homes. This would be a way for them to supplement income while still caring for family and children’s needs.”

Velma Whiting
Inmate, ICIW

“When they came and talked to us and started this program, the entrepreneur program, it helped to bring out my idea. It helped me to look at things that I never knew I needed to do. How will I finance it? How will I get my inventory? How will I get it out to the market? Who will I sell it to, that sort of thing. Because I just didn’t know how to go about it.”

B-roll of class

V.O.#3

Velma picked up a crochet needle three years ago. She began making dolls that have become so popular to the staff and others that she can’t keep any on hand. She hopes to parlay her talents into a business when she gets out.

B-roll of Rocksand and
Helen Seenster

V.O.#4

Rocksand is meeting with Helen Seenster who heads up the Waterloo office of ISED. A mother of four, Rocksand was released two years ago from the ICIW where she started taking classes in microenterprising.

Rocksand Pickard
ISED Client

“I had always wanted to start my own business, printing t-shirts, business cards, that sort of thing. I had started before I had gotten arrested. I didn’t know you needed to have a plan. You had to have a written plan or description of your business – where you wanted your business to be in five years, ten years. I knew nothing of target marketing, defining your target audience. I knew nothing of that sort of thing. There are a lot of things I learned.”

B-roll

V.O.#5

The program also offers a grant to women once they've completed their business plans and have met the conditions of their parole. They can apply to ISED for a \$500 trickle-up grant to purchase materials and for advertising.

Christine Mollenkopf-Pigsley

"Three months later, after they receive the first grant, if they have made a profit, they've reinvested at least 20 percent, and they've worked at least 400 hours on their business, they are able to get another \$200.00 This is very critical in the process because it helps overcome that initial capital access barrier. Many don't have the credit history or ability to pay back a loan at this point in the process."

B-roll

V.O.# 6

Helen Seenster is a Pastor of the Koinonia Ministries Full Gospel Baptist Church and is also a businesswoman. She was already working with individuals coming out of prison when she began working for ISED.

Helen Seenster

Institute for Social and Economic Development
Waterloo Office

"When they come out, just to bridge back into society, if they don't have a support system, whether it's a job or a faith based program, then they have a revolving door and end up going back in. That support system, it makes them feel a part of society again, because they've been away and they need that – someone to bridge the gap and help them reconstruct back into society.

B-roll of men in class

V.O.#7

Another program that ISED has implemented to help bridge the gap for offenders returning to the community is a new partnership with the Bridges of Iowa program at a community-based correctional facility for men. Bridges of Iowa is an intensive substance abuse treatment program that eventually reintegrates the offender into work and family activities while under the supervision of probation or parole. ISED helps to connect them with banking and other financial services and assists them with their taxes as well as child support issues.

Charles Palmer

President, Institute for Social and
Economic Development

"As I interview people in the prison system, people with serious substance abuse problems, a lot of the depression and concern that they're carrying is about the hole that they are in financially, with really no idea of how to get out of that position. Feeling that they have a plan offers them a light at the end of the tunnel."

Christine Mollenkopf-Pigsley

"ISED knows a lot about microenterprise. We know a lot about financial education. We aren't experts in criminal justice. Likewise, the Department of Corrections is not an expert in microenterprise.

We all need to take our strengths and talents; we need to get together and do what each does best. We need to come up with a team approach and offer a whole range of products and services geared to the ex-offenders, which meets their needs and continuously keeps them supported as they reenter. That's what we've seen is making all the difference."

DELANCEY STREET FOUNDATION
San Francisco, CA

B-roll

V.O.#1

The Delancey Street Foundation is a residential education program established in 1971 to provide job training, peer counseling, shelter, food, and other services to individuals who were formerly incarcerated and who are former substance abusers. In 1991, with guidance from local builders and craftsman, the residents themselves completed the building of this 325,000 square foot, 177-unit complex with heated pool, screening room, and auditorium. Charles Williams is an intake coordinator at Delancey Street.

Charles Williams, Intake Coordinator
Delancey Street

"All the residents started like I did. They came in, sat on the bench, and asked for help. They went through the interview process and decided to make a minimum of a two-year commitment. They're here working as residents, but primarily helping the next person that comes in. It's all based on the 'each one, teach one' format."

B-roll

V.O.#2

Residents are required to stay with the program for two years, although the average stay is closer to four, and they gain educational, life, and marketable skills. Over 14,000 have successfully graduated from the program and are living independent lives. The Foundation has expanded over the years and about 1,000 residents live in five facilities across the nation.

Charles Williams

"The entire organization is run and operated by the residents. You're learning from people who've experienced some of the same things as you have."

B-roll of Gerald Miller

V.O.#3

Gerald Miller has been with Delancey Street for 10 years. He says he never worked a day in his life before coming here.

Gerald Miller, Intake Coordinator
Delancey Street

"I'm definitely not the person I was when I came here. It just started out really basic and really simple, just learning how to get

up, go to work on time, how to get along with people through the course of the day, and learning some marketable job skills. We have the largest independent moving company in northern California. We have a three-star restaurant, the Delancey Street Restaurant, and we have Crossroads Café. All of these business training schools are run and operated by Delancey Street residents. I think Delancey Street works so well because it takes the people that are part of the problem and gives us a chance to be part of the solution.”

B-roll

V.O.#4

Delancey Street is self-governed by a board and resident council. It is primarily supported through the earnings of its many business ventures.

Charles Williams

“I used to wake up every morning and look out and say ‘God, I can’t believe. Here I was in San Quentin last week and here I am in Delancey Street.’ I’m looking around and I’m living in luxury. It’s just something you never completely get used to. It just makes you feel grateful in knowing that your life can change if you put a little work to it.”