

The challenge.

Life after prison is hard. Obstacles include finding housing, securing health care, reestablishing family relationships and, of course, getting a job. Not surprisingly, many former prisoners have little work experience and limited work skills. These deficits, along with their criminal record, make ex-offenders seem like unattractive job candidates to most employers.

Strong correlation between employment and success of ex-offenders in the community.

At the federal level, 80% of ex-offenders whose supervision was revoked were unemployed at the time of the violation. A Texas study found that an unemployed ex-offender is three times more likely to return to prison than an ex-offender who is employed (Eisenberg, 1990).

Providing employment opportunities to ex-offenders will result in fewer people returning to prison, less taxpayer money spent to prosecute and incarcerate repeat offenders, and fewer people victimized by repeat offenders. Employment benefits the individual and the community as they become contributing, taxpaying members in the communities where they live and work.

It makes fiscal sense.

The simple fiscal reality is that finding work for ex-offenders can prevent crime and save states a bundle. Although estimates vary widely by state, incarcerating a person for one year costs about \$25,000. Employment, on the other hand, provides stability, boosts self-worth and, most importantly, reduces spending and adds to state revenues. More and more states are realizing that helping ex-offenders obtain stable employment and access to other services (i.e., housing and drug treatment) can reduce correctional costs. Somewhat expensive up front, these approaches cost much less in the long run than incarceration. The money saved from fewer new crimes, victims, arrests, prosecutions, and incarcerations can be used to fund education, health care, transportation, and other state needs.

Employer benefits.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit reduces an employer's federal income tax liability by as much as \$2,400 for each ex-offender employed. For more information, contact the Department of Employment and Economic Development at 651-297-2219 or visit their web site at www.deed.state.mn.us/wotc.

Federal Bonding Program provides fidelity bonds, at no cost to the employer. The bonds

serve as insurance for employers against theft, forgery, larceny, or embezzlement of money or property by an employee covered by the bond. The bond amount issued is usually \$5,000 but can be as much as \$10,000. For more information contact the Minnesota Federal Bonding Service at 651-296-8400 or visit their web site at www.deed.state.mn.us/bonding.

Mandatory Drug Testing is required for the majority of ex-offenders under the supervision of the probation officer.

Third Party Risk Notification. The U.S. Probation Office will ensure that the employer is notified if an ex-offender is considered for employment and poses a possible risk to the employer or community.

Conditions to Maintain Employment. Each ex-offender under the supervision of the U.S. Probation Office has a standard condition to be employed or involved in an educational or training program approved by the U.S. Probation Office.

Probation Officer as a resource. Job retention is a priority. The probation officer will work with the employer to address any performance issues.
