

# Pathways to Employment

## Employment and Crime Reduction

Employment is recognized as increasing success for individuals under criminal justice supervision and reducing recidivism. It is one of the community ties that can make the difference for these individuals and their families in participating in the legitimate economies of communities across New York State. Employment can help fulfill the commitment of the New York State Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives to promote public safety, ensure offender accountability, provide restitution to victims whenever possible and reduce recidivism.

The RAND study of ISP programs, initiated by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (U.S. Department of Justice), identified greater participation in employment, among other factors, “as associated with lower levels of recidivism (both technical violations and new arrests),” (Petersilia and Turner, 1991). In their manual, *Restructuring Intensive Supervision Programs: Applying “What Works”*, the American Probation and Parole Association concluded: “There appears to be a relationship between greater participation in treatment and employment programs and lower recidivism.” Dr. Faye Taxman, Dr. Edward Latessa and other leading criminal justice researchers also recognize the importance of employment in positive supervision outcomes.

To improve the outcome of probation across the state and to improve the employment of these New Yorkers, the New York State Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives (DPCA) and the New York State Department of Labor (DOL) in collaboration with county probation departments, have cooperated in the formation of a three part employment program. The program began in the summer of 2003 with Pathways to Employment training delivered to Probation Officers across the state as well as to partners involved in providing employment services to probationers.

In January 2005 a six member team from NYS, attended an intensive 3 week training sponsored by the National Institute of Correction’s (NIC) Offender Workforce Development Division (OWD). The NYS team became certified Offender Workforce Development Specialists (OWDS). This qualifies them to assist individuals who have criminal records with making informed decisions relative to job and career choices based on their abilities, aptitudes and interests and provide information relevant to today’s job market using an evidenced based curriculum.

Following the NIC OWDS training, the NYS team developed a three part offender employment training program. **Pathways to Employment** is now the umbrella for all three program components: **Employment Matters (EM)**, **Ready, Set, Work! (RSW)**, and **Retention Counts! (RC)**. The New York State team has expanded to seventeen with New York City and Suffolk County Probation Departments’ April 2007 completion of this training.

## Pathways to Employment Training

## **Employment Matters**

Since its inception, **Pathways to Employment** has been presented not only to probation officers but also to One-Stop partners, TANF program staff, and other community employment workers. The training includes presentations on being ready, willing and able to work; legal barriers to employment; available employer tax credits; and federal bonding. It also serves to educate probation officers about available community resources to connect probationers with employment, most especially the local One Stop centers. Upon completion of the OWDS training, the original Pathways to Employment training was expanded. A curriculum entitled **Employment Matters (EM)**, a 6 hour training created by the OWDS team members, is presented to probation officers and other employment service providers. **EM** covers selective modules from the **RSW** curriculum, a job readiness program for probationers. The purpose of the **EM** training is to equip probation officers and other service providers with specific information that they can use to direct and help motivate individuals they supervise who are unemployed or need help with finding quality employment.

Since the collaboration between DPCA and DOL began in 2003 there has been a combined total of **49 PTE** and **EM** trainings with **1109** total offender service providers trained, including **773** probation staff.

## **Ready, Set, Work!**

These groups entitled **Ready, Set, Work!** are probation officer facilitated job readiness groups for probationers. A 20 hour curriculum developed by the OWDS team with NIC helps probationers with skill building and equips them to make choices which will lead to employment and to job retention and advancement. Along with the traditional job readiness content the **RSW** curriculum also includes: Assessments, Barriers and Resources, Legal Issues and Financial Incentives, as well as a module which focuses on the local One Stops, to encourage increased probationer use of this valuable community resource.

With the addition of the New York City OWDS team, **Ready, Set, Work!**, will be the foundation of Pathways to Employment by providing offender workforce development training directly to probationers and is poised to become the gold standard in NYS probation departments.

## **Retention Counts!**

**Retention Counts! (RC)** is for graduates of the **RSW** groups. The **RC** group helps probationers address problems that they encounter once employed and develop strategies to recognize and deal with these problems as well as personal or family issues which can effect employment, before they result in job loss. This group is also for those who have completed **RSW** and have not yet secured appropriate employment and those who may need to be reemployed due to job loss. Role modeling and skill building are important components of this program. The **RC** curriculum includes the following modules: Work Culture, Communication, Problem Solving, Productivity, Customer Service, Teamwork, Advancement, Stress Management, and Money Management.

## **Offender Workforce Development Specialists**

In November 2007 certified Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS) were trained as OWDS Instructors by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) through its Offender Workforce Development Division. The new OWDS-Instructors are preparing to provide the 3 week OWDS training to 25 probation officers, partners, and alternative to incarceration programs under the supervision of NIC beginning in March of 2008. Successful training will provide at least 25 more certified Offender Workforce Development Specialist to work in community corrections across the state.

### **Training Dates:**

March 24-28, 2008

May 5-9, 2008

June 16-19, 2008

# **Training Numbers as of March, 2008**

## **Pathways to Employment** **And** **Employment Matters**

- 1109 **Total trained**
- probation staff and
  - non probation service providers
- 773 **Total Probation Staff**
- 24% of (approx. 3,000) total Probation staff
  - 29% of (approx. 2,500) Case-bearing staff
- 49 **Total PTE/EM trainings since June 2003**

### **Ready, Set, Work!**

- 211 **Probationers completing *RSW!***