



This newsletter shares information, policy and program updates and best practice information to 20 County Re-entry Task Forces and community stakeholders.

- Albany
- Bronx
- Broome
- Dutchess
- Erie
- Kings
- Monroe
- Nassau
- Niagara
- New York
- Oneida
- Onondaga
- Orange
- Queens
- Rensselaer
- Rockland
- Schenectady
- Suffolk
- Ulster
- Westchester

The New York State Council on Community Re-entry and Reintegration aims to reduce barriers for New Yorkers with criminal convictions.

**County Re-entry Task Forces Continue to Serve During Pandemic**

COVID-19 presented many challenges for the County Re-Entry Task Forces (CRTFs), but they continued to provide services to individuals returning home from state incarceration. The CRTFs, in partnership with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), provided a range of re-entry stabilization, cognitive-behavioral intervention, and employment services to over 2,496 individuals during the contract year ending September 2021. In addition, 605 individuals who enrolled in a Cognitive Behavioral Intervention and/or Employment Readiness Curriculum program completed it. Ten of the 20 CRTFs had at least three or more contracted milestones with achievement over 100 percent. The CRTFs achieved this level of programmatic success amidst COVID-19 which helped support so many returning citizens who needed the assistance during this unprecedented time.

**Training Delivered to more than 1,800 DOCCS Institution and Field Staff**

OPCA and DOCCS partnered together to deliver 40 virtual trainings to guidance/counseling, community supervision and re-entry staff across the state. OPCA staff presented information on the CRTF referral process (pre/post release), aspects of service coordination, the purpose behind case conference committee meetings and bi-monthly meetings and concluding with a presentation on the various cognitive behavioral interventions and employment readiness programming offered by the CRTFs. OPCA trained over 1,800 staff from all seven regions and 50 correctional facilities.

**Sixteen Professionals Certified as Workforce Development Specialists**

Sixteen probation officers, community corrections practitioners and re-entry managers graduated from the most recent Workforce Development Specialist (WDS) class and received their certification in the 180-hour challenging training program. This skill-based training constitutes OPCA's 17<sup>th</sup> WDS training; graduates will join more than 400 certified specialists who are authorized to lead individuals in groups through the 20-hour **Ready, Set, Work!** Program. Specialists are certified to utilize specific competencies and related skills to assist individuals with criminal histories make informed decisions about jobs and career paths based on knowledge of their interests, skills/abilities, and values; educational and occupational opportunities; and the realities of the work world. The graduates were employed in a broad spectrum of criminal justice agencies including Albany County Probation, Nassau County Probation, and several County Re-entry Task Forces (Broome, Orange, Monroe, Schenectady, and Niagara), the PathStone Corporation, Project MORE, EAC/Nassau County Drug Court, Erie Shore Judicial Services, Osborne Association, Center for Community Alternatives NYC, and Allegany County Employment and Training Center. Leighanna Gross from the Broome County Re-entry Task Force was the Valedictorian and Molly Cieslica from PathStone Corporation was the Salutatorian. Congratulations to all the graduates! A big thank you to Frank Cangiano, Community Corrections Representative 2 and WDS Program Manager of the Vocation, Education, Employment and Re-Entry Unit for his continued and inspiring leadership!

**Spotlight: Bronx CRTF and District Attorney's Office Host Resource Fair**

On Nov. 6, the Bronx County District Attorney's Office held a Re-entry Resource Fair. Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark, CRTF Coordinator Felix Gonzalez and several others were speakers at the event. The resource fair was designed to connect justice involved individuals to healthcare, employment, housing, and services to assist individuals with obtaining personal identification. COVID-19 testing and vaccination options were also available on site.

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For more information on any of the topics mentioned within, to report any difficulties you may have experienced receiving this email, or if you have any information you would like included in the next issue, please contact [Taylor Alfred](#).

Past issues of *New York Re-Entry Today* are available on the [DCJS website](#). Bookmark the link!

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**Client Success Story:** The Schenectady CRTF is located at the Center for Community Justice (CCJ), a non-profit organization whose programs are based in restorative justice principles, that include re-entry services, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), restitution, community accountability boards, and community service. The CRTF has a former client who is now volunteering at the CCJ and is a member of the team. When the client was initially released from DOCCS and before he could volunteer at CCJ, he completed Interactive Journaling and **Ready, Set, Work!**. Upon graduation from **Ready, Set, Work!** he began volunteering at CCJ two days a week answering phones and doing office related jobs. In a few weeks, the client is scheduled to begin college courses at Hudson Valley Community College to build up his GPA before entering the Business Administration Track.

#### **New Workforce Development Program**

New York State provided millions of dollars in funding to localities across the state to implement various job programs for at-risk New Yorkers aged 18-24, who are living in areas impacted by high rates of gun violence. In New York City, the new program will be implemented by the [Consortium for Worker Education](#) and a network of neighborhood-level partners, funded under the New York State Department of Labor. Participants can explore jobs, careers, and trades in many areas, including: auto repair and maintenance, commercial driver's licenses, construction management, culinary, baking and food service, health care, building trades apprenticeships, IT software and support, cyber security, building services, and hospitality and tourism. Programs shall complete [the online interest form](#), which will be sent securely to the Division of Employment and Workforce Solutions at the New York State Department of Labor.

#### **Update – NYS Department of Education**

As of Dec. 31, 2021, the Test Assessing Secondary Completion, or TASC, test is no longer being offered in New York State as a method for individuals to achieve their High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma. More information on the four current pathways toward achieving an HSE diploma in New York State is available [here](#).

#### **Proposed Legislation**

##### *Restore the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) for Incarcerated Individuals*

In 1995, a New York State law prohibited incarcerated people from being eligible to receive state financial aid. This year, Governor Kathy Hochul will propose legislation reversing this ban and expanding educational opportunities within correctional facilities. This legislation will repeal the prohibition against using TAP in prisons; stipulate that universities contracting with DOCCS provide career counseling services for incarcerated students and offer degrees with meaningful career paths; and engage businesses to participate in career fairs inside prisons.

#### **New Legislation**

On Nov. 2, Gov. Kathy Hochul [signed legislation](#) (S.282/A.6769) that allows individuals who were under the age of 19 when they were convicted of a crime, and eligible but denied Youthful Offender adjudication, to reapply retroactively. For those convicted of a crime when they are under the age of 19, New York's Youthful Offender Law provides the opportunity for a conviction to be replaced by a confidential, non-criminal adjudication and reduced prison sentence. This legislation allows those who were not granted that designation, and who have not been convicted of another crime in at least five years since their original sentence, to apply for retroactive designation of youthful offender status.

On Nov. 3, Gov. Kathy Hochul, [signed new legislation](#) (S.5468/A.2530) to establish a commission to study and develop a plan for improving education in state prisons. The new legislation aims to reduce recidivism by improving education for incarcerated individuals.