

WiCAC Meeting Hand-Out
10.26.2010

At the WiCAC meeting on 10/26/2010, members of the WiCAC and the reentry community broke into three smaller groups to address these questions:

- 1) What is working within the workforce system for the Reentry population?
- 2) What are trends in the experiences folks in the Reentry Population are having as relates to access to workforce opportunities?

Each small group had at least one member of the WiCAC facilitating and recording community comments. Below is a list of comments and suggestions recorded by each group. "Dot" represents an area identified by the group as a "priority."

Group #1 (facilitated by Cameron McHenry)

What has been your experience with the existing programs in San Francisco?

What works?

- CBOs need to ensure that they are building on the successful networking of their clients
- Local Union 6 is open to hiring reentry individuals right away
- Building on self-investment while individuals are still in custody

What's missing?

- There needs to be more focus on pre-release programs for incarcerated individuals. Programs that target folks while they're still in custody (5 dots)
- There needs to be more education and accountability of employers. Ensure employers are following the law, not allowing them to shut doors on re-entry job seekers.
- Ensure that the Employment non-discrimination act and the Office of Labor Standards Enforcement (OLSE) enforces fair hiring practices that benefits job seekers in the reentry population (11 dots)
- More advocates and champions are needed at the City-level and on the Board of Supervisors to secure and identify points of entry for employment
- City contracts should mandate that projects (with 20 or more staff) incorporate a hiring practice that requires them to hire from other service providers
- More education on the part of both the City and the CBOs about the rights, limitations and barriers the reentry population faces as a result of their convictions (1 dot)

What are some suggestions for change?

- Increased priority investment (financial, support and recognition) in wraparound services that help reentry individuals overcome barriers and connect with life skills/job readiness training prior to employment placement (7 dots)
- Removal of community-building barriers , e.g. felons are barred from associating with other known felons
- More internships and training programs that lead to REAL jobs
- More focus on developing social enterprises with an emphasis on hiring from particular vulnerable populations

Group #2 (facilitated by Krystal Koop)

General Issues/Needs

- Need for individualized reentry plans, not one size fits all
- Varying skill levels for reentry job seekers
- Need for more collaboration with unions
- Need to target smaller and/or local employers (1 dot)
- Discussion of a potential expansion on background checks (FBI checks) in SF County (1 dot)
- “sweeping” hiring policies (2 dots)

Service Coordination Issues

- Distrust of systems within the Reentry population
- Reentry population is least informed of resources and programs
- Reentry population does not know their rights
- Major communication breakdown between correctional institutions and service providers post-release and/or no communication paths between the two.
- Computer illiterate

Employment programs issues

- Lack of communication between services providers and clients (don’t know if you’re in or out of programs)
- No referrals out are given if a client is not accepted into a program
- Very low capacity of employment opportunities for clients who have finished trainings (1 dot)
- Low quality of jobs that are offered to graduates of trainings (2 dots)
- Excessive amounts of paperwork

Business Development/Business Services Issues

- Need to motivate more small businesses
- Educate employers on benefits of hiring reentry population, beyond just tax credits
- More personal relationships with employers
- Education of employers on legal/illegal hiring practices surrounding formerly incarcerated
- Disclosure to employers “outs” the client to hiring staff and managers pre-employment
- Most jobs developed are low wage and undesirable
- “compassion fatigue” on the part of the employer

OEWD Issues

- No understanding of system capacity/limitations
- Doesn’t realize the system is not as flexible or is slower to flex than what is needed and/or required by OEWD
- More of a focus on numbers as opposed to clients
- Unrealistic goals for CBOs

Group #3 (facilitated by Jamie Brewster)

What has your experience been working with existing programs in SF?

- * Felony question - "ban the box"
- * Bondable, one time only
- * Explaining criminal records- explain in writing, use references
- * Gaps in employment- use your work experience from when in jail/prison
- * Tattoo removal, medical dental care
- * Need to focus on literacy, math

What is working?

- Pre-release programs seem most important to everyone (6 dots)
- Networking sessions like today's WICAC mtg
- Paid internships (1 dot)
- Willing employers to hire this population, e.g. *UCSF, Luminalt, ABC* (construction), *Goodwill, Walden House*, CBOs,
- *Clean Slate, Back on Track*

What's not working?

- Lack of info to probationers, parolees (1 dot)
- Client fears
- Unrealistic hiring goals from funders both private and public
- Lack of housing, transient