FROM INCARCERATION TO EMPLOYMENT: HELPING EX-OFFENDERS TRANSITION TO THE WORKFORCE

ASHLEY CHASON, B.S.
ABEDE TESFA, M.S., Ed.S.

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, TALLAHASSEE, FL

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From Incarceration to Employment: Helping Ex-Offenders Transition to the Workforce

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Fact Sheet

- Incarceration rates have increased 700% between 1970 and 2005 (Public Safety Performance Project, 2007)
- 630,000-650,000 people released from state and federal prisons every year (Samuels & Mukami, 2004)
- In 2005, over 7 million people were under some form of correctional supervision (James & Glaze, 2006)
  - 2,186,230 are held in federal or state prisons or local jails (Beck & Harrison, 2006)
- Between 38%-47% of mentally ill inmates were not employed in the month before their arrest (James & Glaze, 2006)
- Average offender has only 10.7 years of education, 60% unemployed one year after release (Petersilia, 1999)
- Women behind bars:
  - White women ages 35-39: 1/355; Hispanic women: 1/297; black women: 1/100
  - 98% have experienced some trauma (rape, incest, domestic violence)
- Upon release, ex-offenders receive an average of $69 from their state department of corrections, or $100-$500 from Federal Bureau of Prisons
- Intense prison construction has been seen as a way to reduce recidivism and lower crime rates, this has not been successful
- Inmates or juvenile delinquents comprised the sample of interests in only 0.4% of Journal of Counseling Psychology publications over 25 years

Recidivism

- Term used to refer to those who are re-arrested, re-convicted, and re-incarcerated after being released from prison
  - 67% of state inmates released in 1994 committed at least one serious crime within 3 years (Butterfield, 2002)
  - Work experience while in prison seems to reduce recidivism after release (Jenkins, Steurer, & Pendry, 1995)
  - Recidivism more linked to lack of employment than background characteristics (Klein & Caggiano, 1986)

Factors Inhibiting Employment

- Public policy
  - Over the past 20 years, increased the number, range, and severity of civil penalties for those with convictions, or even arrests
  - Ex.: restrictions on food stamps, public assistance, public housing, students loans
- Corporate policy
  - Many industries legally compelled to exclude ex-offenders

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- Fewer than 40% of all employers said they would definitely or probably hire ex-offenders in non-college job (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2002)
  - Discrimination
    - Most states:
      - Allow employers to judge based on arrests, not conviction
      - Allow employers to deny jobs regardless of how long ago or the circumstances
      - Make history available over the internet
  - Skill deficiencies
    - These would limit employability even without offender status
    - Inconsistent work histories
  - Social factors
    - Potential problems:
      - Re-offending
      - Homelessness
      - Substance abuse: up to 75% (Travis et al., 2001)
      - Mental health issues: conservatively, 16% of prison population
- **Strengths**
  - May be more willing to start in minimum-wage jobs
  - May have developed a unique skill set in prison (ex. Matchstick making)
  - UNICOR Federal Bonding Program is designed to provide theft insurance to employers who hire ex-offenders
- **Advocacy Resources**
  - Ideal program has services offering job placement services and employment contacts, supplemented with support services and skill development
  - Ex. Project Reconnect: placement rate of 3,000 jobs a year with 50% retention rate
  - Brooklyn’s Drug Treatment Alternative-to-Prison-Program
    - At time of arrest, 26% were working, after release and training program, 92%
**Success Stories**

**Charles S. Dutton**

*History:* Dropped out of school in the 7th grade, Sentenced to 3 years in prison for possession of a deadly weapon; 7 ½ years for assaulting a corrections officer.

*Achievements Include:* Attended Drama School at Yale
Starred in several television shows, including his own sitcom

**Alfredo “Al” J. Pacino**

*History:* Dropped out of School at 17 years of age, Charged with carrying a concealed weapon

*Achievements Include:* Studied at the Actors Studio; Ranked #4 in Empire (UK) magazine's "The Top 100 Movie Stars of All Time" list in October 1997; One of the eleven elite thespians to have been nominated for both a Supporting and Lead Acting Academy Award in the same year.

**Don King**

*History:* Served 4 years after being convicted of manslaughter; worked as a numbers runner and racketeer; 30+ arrests.

*Achievements Include:* Has promoted fights for Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Leonard, Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, Felix Trinidad; Campaigned for George W. Bush in 2004 election; Attended Kent State University and Case Western University; Inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, 1997

**Michael Anderson**

*History:* Served time for armed robbery; discovered matchstick making while in prison

*Achievements:* runs matchstick making business through Dyfed-Powys Probation Service

**Jeff Henderson**

*History:* arrested at age 23 for crack cocaine and sentenced to 20 years in prison; learned to cook while incarcerated; once he got out he was turned down by every restaurant on the Sunset Strip in L.A.

*Achievements:* executive chef at Café Bellagio in Las Vegas; and Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, the first African-American named "Chef de Cuisine" at Caesars Palace; best-selling author; motivational speaker

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Resources for Ex-Offenders and Advocates

National Hire Network
www.hirenetwork.org
- assist with survival, stabilization, and self-sufficiency needs
- free publications to learn about transitional issues
- information on companies that get paid to hire ex-offenders
- state-specific rules and procedures to follow
- both a national clearinghouse for information and an advocate for policy change

After Prison: Roadblocks to Re-entry
www.lac.org
- legal barriers for those with records
- LAC advocates adoption of public policies that:
  - protect people in recovery or still suffering from addiction, people with HIV/AIDS, and people with criminal records against discrimination in employment, housing, benefits, zoning and other areas, and violations of privacy
  - reform mandatory sentencing laws to enable community sanctioning of appropriate—especially non-violent, often addicted—offenders
  - expand funding for community corrections, including alternatives to incarceration

Eastbay Works
http://www.eastbayworks.org/categories.php?id=343
- database of websites helping connect ex-offenders with employment opportunities

Family and Corrections Network
www.fcnetwork.org
- provided ways for those concerned with families of prisoners to share information and experiences in an atmosphere of mutual respect
- advocating criminal justice policy reform that upholds the value of families;
- encouraging networking among families of prisoners for mutual support and cooperative action
- creating opportunities for linking with and learning from families of prisoners.

Ex-Offenders Job Search in the USA
http://www.cvtips.com/job_search_ex_offender.html
- job search information center with information targeted to ex-offenders

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Federal Bureau of Prisons
http://www.bop.gov/inmate_programs/itb/references.jsp
- provides employment resources

How to do good after prison place
www.jointfx.com
- created by ex-inmate Michael B. Jackson to help ex-offenders find success after incarceration

Getting back to work: employment programs for ex-offenders
http://www.nicic.org/Library/016727
- issues surrounding ex-offender employment programs are discussed
- five case studies of ex-offender employment programs

Books for Ex-Offenders and Advocates

Best resumes and letters for ex-offenders, by Wendy S. Enelow
- Step-by-step instructions on creating resumes and cover letters specifically designed for ex-offenders

Clean, sober and unemployed: Strategies for the post-rehabilitation job seeker, by Carter E. Elliot
- Job hunting strategies for drug and alcohol addicts and those with poor employment histories

Double you: the person you are and the person you are meant to be, by Ronald C. Mendlin
- Prepares the ex-offender for the job search by including basic job search resources and life skills for living on the outside world

Ex-Inmate’s Complete Guide to Successful Employment, by Errol Craig Sull
- Designed for soon-to-be released or newly released ex-offenders
- Discusses how to answer difficult questions, gives advice on resume writing, interviewing, and provides tips on managing stress

Expungement: freedom from the disability and life sentence of a legal record, by J.D. Eastman
- A guide to clearing your criminal record

No one is unemployable: creative solutions for overcoming barriers to employment, by Debra L. Angel
- Includes a 10 step approach for overcoming barriers to employment

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Videos

*After prison: how the ex-convict can find a place to live, get work, and stay straight*
- Inmates answer questions including: What can I do about housing? How can I overcome stigma? What do I tell potential employers?

*Putting the bars behind you: a guide to job interviewing for the ex-offender*
- Provides job search and interview skills for the ex-offender

Self-Help/Inspirational Resources

*How to do good after prison: a handbook for the committed man,* by Michael B. Jackson
- A young man turns his life around after being incarcerated at the age of 18
- Learned to direct his anger towards positive change

*Cooked: from the streets to the stove, from cocaine to foie gras,* by Jeff Henderson
- An inspiring memoir of how one of San Diego's most successful cocaine dealers became an award-winning chef

Legal Resources

*Center for Law and Social Policy*
[http://www.clasp.org/publications.php?id=10#0](http://www.clasp.org/publications.php?id=10#0)
- Organization dedicated to encourage policies and programs that help, not hinder, ex-offenders make a fresh start with their families and the labor market
- A collection of policy briefs, fact sheets, legislative and regulatory analyses, presentations, and testimonies for ex-offenders

*National American Civil Liberties Union*
[www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)
- A national non-profit organization which actively helps fight for the civil liberties of individuals

*National Equal Employment Opportunity Commision*
[www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)
- A federal organization which enforces Title VII (prevents employment discrimination) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

*Criminal Record Repository*
State’s department of law enforcement
Ex. [www.fdle.state.fl.us/CriminalHistory](http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/CriminalHistory)
- Obtain a copy of rap sheet and learn about sealing, expunging, or cleaning it up

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