



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



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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 7<sup>th</sup> 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

## Resources for Ex-Offenders and Advocates

### *National Hire Network*

[www.hirenetwork.org](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.cvtips.com/job_search_ex_offender.html)

- job search information center with information targeted to ex-offenders

***Federal Bureau of Prisons***

[http://www.bop.gov/inmate\\_programs/itb/refereces.jsp](http://www.bop.gov/inmate_programs/itb/refereces.jsp)

- provides employment resources

***How to do good after prison place***

[www.jointfx.com](http://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>

- 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 Commission*

[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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