



Cuyahoga County Reentry Review

Towards Employment: Job-Readiness Training

One of the greatest challenges of reentry is found in a little line on an employment application. "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?" Sheila Culbreath, 48, had every reason to avoid the question. "In my early 20s, I had dropped out of high school, gotten into drugs and alcohol. I was with someone during a robbery – and so I was just as guilty." Sheila was sentenced to two years at the Ohio Reformatory for Women in Marysville.

After convictions for forgery and receiving stolen property, she had three cases on her record. She hit rock bottom and made a decision – get clean from drugs and alcohol. But the convictions remained – and presented a barrier to employment.

In the past, not all employers did background checks – so Sheila had ignored the question on job applications. She managed to get hired doing medical assistant work for more than ten years. But then the doctor's office she managed was closing. She knew that most employers do background checks now – and that her past conviction could keep her from ever working again.

"I ran into a brick wall trying to get a job – until I remembered Towards Employment. I told them I needed help – I needed the tools to be gainfully employed with my record," says Sheila.

In August 2009, she attended "Networks 4 Success," the Towards Employment

four-week job readiness workshop for anyone with a felony record. "They taught me how to talk about my record – how to turn a negative into a positive. I could admit my past – but then talk about the positive things I'm doing now... I've been clean from drugs and alcohol for 25 years – and I'm assistant basketball coach for my daughter's team. I help the girls see how to avoid trouble and what it can bring you."

"When the barriers won't move - jump over them!"

The Towards Employment workshop focuses on two key components: "soft skills" of communication, time management, and problem solving ... and "life skills" including managing work-life balance, financial literacy, prevention education and how to access community resources. Participants get help with resume-writing, interviewing, job search, referrals and follow-up support after being hired.

"But it's not just about finding a job for you – they give you tools to find your own job. You learn how to dress properly, how to speak effectively... if you really want it, you can do it. I tell people – they'll teach you if you'll listen. Take the cotton out of your ears and put it in your mouth!" Sheila says with her characteristically positive smile.

Sheila credits Towards Employment with helping her think outside the box of her past jobs – and transfer her customer service skills to other work. While visiting a local

fitness center, a manager suggested they could use her bubbly personality at the front desk. She applied for the job – and even though they did not ask about her past convictions, she was prepared – and told them up front, turning a negative into a positive. Sheila was hired -- and in less than 90 days was promoted to Operations Supervisor and given a raise. "I run the place now! I keep it clean, help members and supervise a staff of six people."

Sheila loves returning to Towards Employment offices at 1255 Euclid Avenue – where she has given her testimony at workshops and helped out in the computer lab. "Like they say in AA – in order to keep what you have, you have to give it away," she explains.

Sheila considers herself a "poster child" for Towards Employment and is forever grateful for the way they made her feel good about herself – even helping her conquer a fear of trying to earn her GED. "They referred me to the on-site Lakewood ABLE class for my GED. They're so patient if you can't read, write or do math. They helped me believe in myself – if you do that, you can do anything."

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Classes at Towards Employment

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Juvenile Reentry Court in Practice (Second in a series)



Last month, the *Reentry Review* described the Juvenile Reentry Court project in Cuyahoga County. The Cuyahoga Juvenile Reentry Court offers a variety of services that are available to participants in the Juvenile Reentry Court. Magistrate Valerie Bickerstaff explains that “Juvenile Reentry Court will provide juvenile offenders who really want to turn their lives around the support they will need to achieve their goal. At the same time, the court provides supervision and discipline to reduce the likelihood of recidivism.”

As a condition of judicial release, the participants will agree to begin pre-release services starting while they are still in the institution. Youth will also work to develop marketable skills while also building upon their talents and interests. This will happen through a number of Court-Involved Training opportunities.

The Court partners with Cuyahoga Community College and other qualified professionals to provide literacy, GED and job training services through an Onsite Computer Training Lab. Participants can work on getting their General Education Development Certificate if it is needed. Youth that pass the GED test within six months can move on to one of the computer job training courses offered through the Court-Involved Training (CIT) Program. Younger participants who plan to obtain their high school diploma will be guided to educational services in the local school district and community.

Court Involved Training Program

The Court Involved Training (CIT) Program is designed to teach participants computer skills with the aim of preparing them for the job market. There are four different programs available: (1) Basic Microsoft Office; (2) Microsoft Intermediate Level; (3) CCENT (Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician) Training; or (4) AutoCAD (Computer Aided Design Drafting).

CCENT (Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician): Cisco Certification is a highly marketable computer skill even at the entry level. Computer Technicians that are CCENT certified can install, manage, maintain & troubleshoot a small enterprise network, including network security. Reentry Court classes can prepare youth to pass the entry level exam.

AutoCAD (Computer Aided Drafting): First released in 1982, AutoCAD is now the leading program for computer-aided design throughout the world. It is an essential tool in many industries, including mechanical and civil engineering, architecture, facilities planning and management. More employers use it, and need workers skilled in it, than any other CAD system.

Advocacy and Mentoring Services

In addition to Court Involved Training, Juvenile Reentry Court will partner with the Teen Start, Inc., 3MB-Men Mentoring Men and Boys Project to provide advocacy services on behalf of project youth. The advocate will work with youth, family, the community, and the Court.

Teen Start, Inc.'s 3MB-Men Mentoring Men and Boys will also provide mentoring services and cognitive behavioral therapy. Intensive mentoring helps youth and their families manage problems and reinforce positive values and relationships. From a faith-based perspective, the 3MB Mentoring Project will provide youth with a sense of brotherhood and provide positive activities.

Substance Abuse/Chemical Dependency Counseling

Catholic Charities - Juvenile Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime provides assessment and case management services for participants suffering from alcohol and other drug abuse and dependency.

Additional Services: Offsite Training

Towards Employment currently provides offsite services through its Urban Youth Works (UYW) Project. Eligible youth will be 18-20 years of age and must enroll in programming within 90 days of being released from ODYS. The goal is to provide opportunities for meaningful subsidized and unsubsidized employment.

The Partners

- Cuyahoga County Juvenile Reentry Court
- Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry
- Catholic Charity – Juvenile Treatment Alternatives to Safer Communities (TASC)
- Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C)
- Ohio Department of Youth Services
- Teen Start Inc.'s 3MB-Men Mentoring Men and Boys (3MB)
- Towards Employment (The Urban Youth's Works Project)
- Golden Ciphers, Inc.
- Cuyahoga County Public Defender's Office
- Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office

Each of the above agencies brings a wealth of resources to the Juvenile Reentry Court Project. Magistrate Bickerstaff puts all of this in perspective. “Reentry Court requires an investment of time and money on our part, but the returns on that investment could be exponential. If we can transform a juvenile offender into a productive adult we will add to the economic well-being of the community, as well as its safety.” ■

Cuyahoga Support Enforcement Agency Street Fest

In celebration of National Child Support Month during August, the Cuyahoga Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) is hosting its Third Annual Street Fest on Monday, August 2, 2010. The popular event is staged on East 17th Street between Superior and Payne Avenues and is open to the public from 10:00 a.m. through 2:00 p.m.

Dozens of Child Support partners are staffing booths providing helpful information for interested families. This year, the Ohio Attorney General's Office will join CSEA and offer fingerprinting for children.

This event guarantees plenty of fun, games and prizes for the kids. Face painting, popcorn and dancing are just a sampling of the fun happening at the Street Fest. CSEA hopes to see you there! ■



GCIRP...The Next Level

The Greater Cleveland Integrated Re-Entry Project (“GCIRP”) officially kicked off in August 2009. As we approach our first year anniversary, it is time for us to take a step back, reflect and plan for the future. Research shows that properly designed and implemented rehabilitation and treatment programs reduce recidivism rates. Moreover, GCIRP's intensive case management, coupled with a family behavioral health treatment approach represents a unique and innovative collaboration of local and state community justice and private community service stakeholders. Community-wide programs are the best way to serve this population.

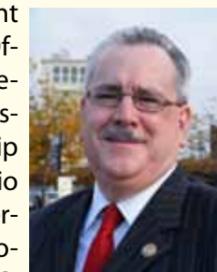
GCIRP is currently recruiting from four institutions and one transitional controlled facility: Grafton Correctional Institution (“GCI”), Lorain Correctional Institution (“LorCI”), North Coast Correctional Treatment Facility (“NCCTF”), North East Pre-Release Center (“NEPRC”) and Oriana House. GCIRP's case management team - Center for Families and Children (“CFC”) and Community Re-Entry (“CRE”) provide pre/post release case management and well as offer the clients an extensive wrap-around service provider network. The collective action of over 30 service providers in the community include agencies in the areas of: basic needs, coaching/mentoring, drug & alcohol treatment, education, employment, financial sustainability, housing, and physical health/dental/vision.

Over the next six months, GCIRP will successfully close approximately 80 clients that have completed both 3-6 months of pre-release and 6 months of post-release case management. Recidivism will be tracked for each client, up to two years post completion.

While GCIRP will continue to recruit and serve clients over the next two years, we will simultaneously raise awareness of the challenges facing individuals returning from incarceration and engage the community in supportive action. Programming alone cannot provide opportunities and effect change for the reentry population. We will specifically target advocacy, public awareness and legislative change. The staggering numbers of individuals incarcerated and released has compelled us to recognize, that we, as a community, can no longer conduct business as usual.

The information in this article was provided by GCIRP staff members.

Luis Vazquez, Manager of the Cuyahoga County Department of Justice Affairs Office of Reentry, received the 2010 Hispanic Leadership Award at the Ohio Hispanic Leadership Summit in Columbus on June 18, 2010. Leaders in education, business, politics and culture attend the Summit, which honors distinguished Hispanic/Latino individuals that have contributed to the improvement of Ohio's Hispanic/Latino Community. Congratulations to Mr. Vazquez.



*We want to hear from you...
Your comments are important to us.*

Write to us at
Cuyahoga County Department of
Justice Affairs
Office of Reentry
310 West Lakeside Avenue, Suite 550
Cleveland, OH 44113

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Towards Employment: *(Continued from Front Cover)*

The positive ripples of her new job are spreading. Sheila feels good about herself and can pay her bills now-- including her daughter's tuition at a private high school. "I made mistakes when I was younger, but I'm not the same person. Now I have a sense of responsibility; somebody trusts me! When I was on the streets, no one trusted me."

Sheila shares the wisdom she gained from Towards Employment, including:

- **-Don't get stuck thinking you can only do one type of job – your skills can transfer to other jobs**
- **Always be "interview-ready" and see every place as a potential employer**
- **Stick with the job skills training workshop... it takes time to form good habits**

Towards Employment is a nonprofit organization that provides job training, placement and sup-



Classes at Towards Employment

port services to disadvantaged adults and formerly-incarcerated people in the Greater Cleveland region. It administers an employment and training program for formerly-incarcerated people funded by the Cuyahoga County Board of Commissioners through the Office of Reentry. Its mission is to empower individuals to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through employment. Learn more at www.towardsemployment.org or call 216-696-5750.

The Citizen Circles Concept

Citizen Circles

Citizen participation and guidance is essential for correctional practices inside and outside institutions. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction has embraced the needs related to offenders returning home from correctional settings and as such one strategy is the implementation of Citizen Circles. The focus is on eight dynamic domain areas: employment, education, associates/social interactions, family/marital, substance abuse and community functioning, personal/emotional orientation and attitude. They create partnerships that promote positive interaction and accountability for offenders upon release. Circle members address risks that contribute to criminal activity by taking ownership of the solution. It is an opportunity for citizens to communicate expectations for successful reentry and help offenders recognize the harm their behavior has caused others. Offenders are able to make amends and demonstrate their value and potential to the community.

Citizen Circles Locations

The Euclid Avenue Citizen Circle The Church of the Covenant

Kathleen Farkas
11202 Euclid Ave.
2nd Monday of every month at 7:00 pm
216.421.0482 ext. 282

East Cleveland

Andrea Graham
1850 Belmore Ave.
Last Wednesday of every month
at 5:00 pm
216.249.0330

Zion Chapel

Rev. Dennis Jonel
4234 Lee Rd.
3rd Monday of every month at 6:00 pm
216.752.2743

CEOGC

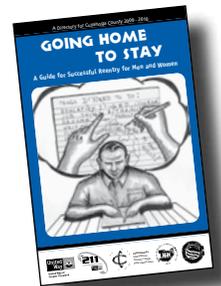
Medical Arts Building

Lewis West
2475 E. 22nd St.
(Lower level)
2nd Monday of every month at 11:30 am
216.357.2621

Mt. Pleasant

Murtis Taylor Center

Diane Cox
13411 Kinsman Ave.
1st Tuesday of every month at 6:00 pm
216.751.1085



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Cuyahoga County Reentry Review



COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:
Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry
email: ReentryInfo@cuyahogacounty.us
phone: 216.698.2501

To receive a copy of **Going Home to Stay**

contact First Call for Help at 216.436.2000 or go online and download a copy at www.211cleveland.org/pdfs/communityreentry.pdf