

## Gatekeepers Re-entry Program: The Importance of Jobs

- I myself am an ex-offender having served 8-1/2 years in prison
- I am here to briefly provide an overview on the importance of being able to attain a job/work as soon as possible from release.
- The average person getting out of prison has financial obligations including many diverse program fees, child support, legal fees, and a lack of housing while facing multiple obstacles as a result of being incarcerated which mostly results in warehousing. Thus, anytime there is a job available we need to have the ability to place folks efficiently.
  - o Upon release, a typical inmate is faced with debt, no income, and returning to normality is a **daunting task**. We are not here to say we want a handout
- Currently there are approximately 18,000 inmates locked up in the State Prisons. 90% will be released to their communities at some point. Most with little or no career skills and only \$50 in their pocket. Needless to say, the importance of getting a job with wrap-around services is a necessity.
- Benefits of having a job allows those reentering society to pay taxes, support their children and families and contribute back to the community in which they reside rather than being supported by community welfare programs.
- We at Gatekeepers in Washington County have found out having dealt with several hundred individuals over the last five years - that it is important to get jobs as soon as possible to allow for self-sufficiency, public safety and confidence for those re-entering to build a new life. We strive to provide job coaching and many necessary elements for each individual's Business of Living (Education, Work, People, and Spirituality)
- In Washington County we encounter 70% recidivism and that is a problem due mostly to those folks not being able to attain employment.
- In Wash Co the local jail has approximately 370 inmates on any given day and 70 percent go back to the detention center. The cost to the local community is great – the consequences of that to education, resources, lack of tax support is just absurd. If you look at the whole picture, it is not just limited to the job – it is so much more than that – its having relationships with local employers, educators, faith-based organizations and people to together create a platform for men and women to attempt to build a life that they never had.

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