



## Re-entry Initiatives

Individuals released from prisons and jails face substantial barriers re-entering society. Without adequate pre- and post-release support with employment, housing, mental health, substance abuse and medical issues, many justice-involved people will return to criminal behavior. In 2016, Gov. Jay Inslee issued an executive order that tasks the state workforce system and other state agencies with reducing recidivism.

### The connection between unemployment and recidivism

Unemployment, in particular, is a documented risk factor for recidivism. The Justice Policy Institute compared state-level employment rates with crime rates and found that on average, states with the highest levels of unemployment had higher violent crime rates than states with lower unemployment.

### The role of the Employment Security Department

In 2019, the state Employment Security Department (ESD), a partner in the statewide WorkSource employment system, received funding from the

## FACT SHEET

Legislature to support, expand and coordinate strategic re-entry initiatives.

**Trained staff empower justice-involved individuals to manage their own employment future.**

WorkSource receives customer referrals from the state Department of Corrections. Juvenile Rehabilitation, part of the state Department of Social and Health Services, refers incarcerated youth to WorkSource.

At WorkSource, ESD staff help those with criminal records find jobs, offering a variety of re-entry services. Trained ESD staff empower justice-involved individuals to manage their own employment future.

#### ESD staff:

- Offer one-on-one employment counseling.
- Coach customers about how to discuss their incarceration with prospective employers.
- Hold re-entry focused workshops and job clubs.
- Teach job search skills, including writing resumes and interviewing.
- Refer eligible customers to training programs.
- Refer customers to other supportive services.
- Teach computer skills.



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- Provide free access to computers and other office equipment.
- We provide services in WorkSource centers, correctional facilities and community organizations, but services are limited in some locations.
- WorkSource staff also facilitate re-entry hiring events in partnership with Workforce Development Councils, colleges and local community organizations.

### **Incarcerated veterans**

ESD works with the WorkSource center at Joint Base Lewis-McChord to provide employment services to military service members discharged due to a felony offense. ESD also provides information and assistance to veterans incarcerated in state correctional facilities and jails who are nearing release.

### **Success in numbers**

From May through November 2018 — the first seven months of the initiative — WorkSource:

- Provided re-entry services to more than 4,300 people statewide.
- Received reports indicating more than 400\* served customers found work.

\*Note: Those who use WorkSource services are not required to report whether they found work. ESD cross-references tax and wage data quarterly to update employment numbers.

