



Working Beyond Conviction

**Goodwill Industries' Call to Action to Ensure
Successful Re-Entry for Ex-Offenders**

Seth Turner, Director for Government Affairs and Public Policy



Working Beyond Conviction

“I probably spent a total of seven years in jail. It was a never-ending cycle. I was totally trapped.”

“It’s been a long journey, but the rewards are worth it... I used to wake up and look in the mirror, and I hated myself. Now I’m proud of who I see. And I have so much further to go; so much further that I want to go. I want to work and be productive.”

*Jason Ringer, Client
Goodwill Industries of Southwestern Pennsylvania*



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Purposes

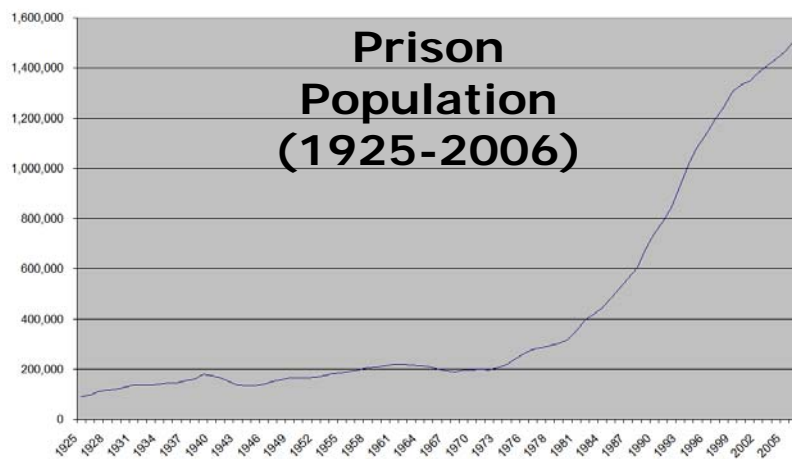
- Inform policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders about challenges faced by ex-offenders and returning prisoners.
- Encourage stakeholders to develop a nationwide continuum for reintegrating ex-offenders and former prisoners.



Scope of the Problem

- Corrections population is increasing
- 2.3 million in jails and prisons at an average cost of \$22,650 per year.
- U.S. has the highest incarceration rate (753 per 100,000 people) in the world
- Corrections expenditures are increasing
- \$65 billion in 2005 and counting
- Bulk of the financial burden is on states

Number of Sentenced Prisoners
Under Federal and State Correctional Jurisdiction (1925-2006)



Direct Expenditures on Corrections (1982-2005)





Trends

- Nearly all of those who are currently incarcerated will someday be released
 - Nearly all will be released from jails
 - 95 percent will someday be released from prisons
 - 700,000 will be released from prison this year
- Recidivism is high
 - Of the 700,000 individuals released this year, approximately 2/3rds will return to prison within 3 years.
- Minorities disproportionately affected
- Employment is critical to success
 - Finding legitimate employment post-release can reduce chances of re-offending.
 - The higher the wages, the less likely ex-offenders will return to crime.



Impact

Educational Attainment for Prison Population		Median personal income	Estimated number of offenders released	Estimated number who will return to prison (67.5 percent)	Estimated lost earnings for those returned to prison	Estimated annual cost for to incarcerating recidivists (\$22,650)
Some High School	39.7%	\$20,321	277,288	187,170	\$3,803,472,436	\$6,280,578,251
High School Diploma or GED	49.0%	\$26,505	342,245	231,015	\$6,123,060,904	\$7,751,847,212
Some Postsecondary Education	11.4%	\$31,054	79,624	53,746	\$1,669,041,328	\$1,803,490,984
Total	100.1		698,459	471,460	\$11,595,574,669	\$15,835,916,446



Barriers to Success

- Stable Housing
- Employment
 - Research shows that finding legitimate employment post-release can reduce chances of reoffending.
 - Research also shows that the higher the wages, the less likely ex-offenders will return to crime.
 - MDRC research cautions that existing research does not prove that there is a correlation between employment and reduced recidivism. However, this research does not support the notion that “nothing works.”



Goodwill a Stakeholder

The New York Times

Sunday, April 27, 2008 Last Update: 9:09 PM ET

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY ARTS & CULTURE HEALTH & SCIENCE LOCAL

THE CITY IN THE REGION

The Baltimore Sun, October 20, 2008
"Falling Short On Training"

Seeking the Key to Employment for Ex-Cons

Published: April 27, 2008

Correction Appended

(Page 2 of 2)

Winston-Salem Chronicle, May 8, 2008
"Second Chance Program Excelling"

Mr. McNair, 22, the son of a drug dealer, approached Mayor Booker on the street last summer after the most recent in a string of jail stints for narcotics sales. "I've always done running the streets."

The New York Times, April 27, 2008

"Seeking the Key To Employment for Ex-Cons"

But he quit the first job Ms. Giardi found him — at a refrigerated warehouse that provides food to the airlines — after a few days because, he said, he could not stand the cold. He was fired from the next, as a shelf stocker at Stop & Shop, for goofing around. Then he stopped going to Goodwill.

Until last month, when Mr. McNair showed up looking for another chance. At a Goodwill mentoring session, Mr. McNair listened as a silver-haired grandfather talked tearfully about missing family milestones because he was always in jail.

"I've never been to a graduation, never been to nothing," said the man, Stanley Carter. "I don't want to end up dying in prison. I don't want to be killed in the street and be memorialized by some balloons on the sidewalk. I want to be remembered as the old man



Goodwill a Stakeholder

- An increasing number of Goodwill agencies are serving an increasing number of ex-offenders and returning prisoners.

	Number of Agencies Serving Ex-Offenders	Number of Ex-Offenders Served
2005	97	45,000
2007	119	82,132

- Long history in workforce development strongly positions Goodwill agencies to provide pre- and/or post-release counseling and support, job training, job placement, and family strengthening.
- Employing ex-offenders decreases risk for re-offending, and therefore helps make communities better and safer.



Goodwill's Call to Action

“Goodwill Industries calls upon key stakeholders including state and federal policymakers, judges, law enforcement officials, service providers (including local Goodwill agencies), educators, employers, and victims to come together to create systemic changes that hold offenders accountable, minimize the negative affects on their communities and families, and support ex-offenders and returning prisoners who want to reenter society to make a positive contribution.”



Service Continuum

- Diversion (Pre-Sentencing and Post-Sentencing)
- Incarceration (General Programs and Pre-Release)
- Post-Release (Residential and Community-based)



Opportunities for Programmatic Responses to:

- Limited education attainment
- Limited work experience
- Heavy debts
- Returning to high-poverty communities with few employment opportunities, low wages and few benefits
- Reluctance among employers
- Professional prohibitions
- Health problems (physical, mental, and substance abuse)
- Limited access to public benefits and supports



What can local Goodwills do?

- Learn about serving ex-offenders
- Offer ESL and GED programs
- Offer soft-skills training that helps families to reconnect
- Provide support that helps reentering parents care for their children after release
- Reach out to corrections administrators in your territories to offer supports that prepare prisoners for release
- Educate other service providers about serving ex-offenders
- Build and strengthen relationships with stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels
- Learn about and get involved in existing local, state, and federal efforts to promote systemic and legislative change
- Suggest including legislative proposals to address barriers facing ex-offenders and former prisoners on state and regional associations' legislative agendas



Specific Affected Populations

- Parents
- Youthful offenders
- Women
- Individuals with physical health, mental health, and substance abuse problems
- Elderly



Opportunities Created by Federal Law

- **Second Chance Act**
 - Landmark legislation that authorizes \$330 million over 2 years for prisoner reentry efforts.
- **Federal Bonding Program**
 - Created by Department of Labor (1966) as an employer job-hire incentive that guaranteed the job honest of at-risk job seekers.
 - Each bond unit provides \$5,000 employee dishonesty insurance for 6 months.
- **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)**
 - In exchange for providing employment opportunities to people representing target populations, employers can claim a federal tax credit. (Up to \$2,400 for each new adult hire.)



Legal and Regulatory Barriers

- Education
- Public Housing
- Denial of Food Stamps and Cash Assistance
- Family Reunification (Adoption and Safe Families Act)
- Voting Rights
- Military Ineligibility



Policy Recommendations

- Systemic and Local – Examples Include:
 - Urge local housing authorities to implement procedures that allow case-by-case decisions about whether to deny access to public housing for people who have been convicted or are related to people who have been convicted of drug-related crimes.
- State Level – Examples Include:
 - Create incentives for employers who hire ex-offenders.
 - Automatically suspend child support obligation or set orders at zero during incarceration.
- Federal – Examples Include:
 - Provide full funding for the Second Chance Act.
 - Work Incentives – Expand financial incentives for ex-offenders to accept low-wage jobs.
 - Prepare prisoners for reentry – Create incentives for One-Stop Operators to make pre-release contact with prisoners.



To download the paper, go to
<http://www.goodwill.org/>
(Select “Public Policy Priorities)

For more information, contact
Seth Turner

Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy

seth.turner@goodwill.org

(240) 333-5508