

SECOND CHANCES, SAFER COUNTIES

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & REENTRY



NACo POLICY RESEARCH PAPER SERIES • ISSUE 3 • 2016 • www.NACo.org

CLACKAMAS COUNTY, OREGON

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

In 2010, the Clackamas County Health, Housing and Human Services Department hosted an event to bring together community partners to discuss the needs of individuals returning to the county from jails and prisons. At that event, the department director asked the Sheriff, the Clackamas Workforce Partnership (CWP)* and Community Corrections to work together to identify available resources, gaps in their services and challenges and opportunities each agency faced in serving this population. This initial meeting has turned into a strong partnership in which the Sheriff's Office and Community Corrections are written into the CWP's strategic plan and the three agencies work collaboratively to serve this population.

In 2012, the three agencies jointly applied for and received an 18-month, \$1.5-million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to provide reentry employment services to women leaving the county jail and state prisons. The purpose of these grants is to provide formerly incarcerated women with stability to help them improve their educational and employment outcomes to reduce recidivism.

CLACKAMAS COUNTY'S MODEL

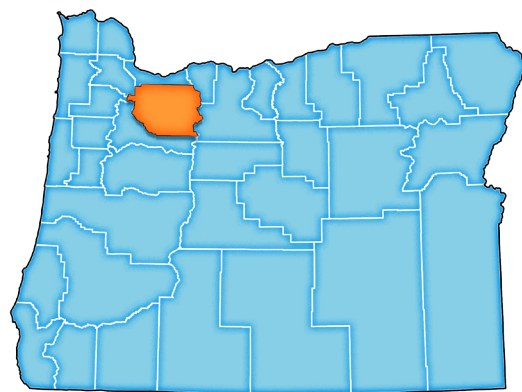
After several months of planning, the grant program began enrolling women to participate. Program staff recruit individuals to be a part of the program while they are still in jail or shortly after being released from jail.

Once enrolled in the program, employment specialists conduct individual assessments to build a holistic view of participants' strengths and needs. From this assessment, individual plans are developed to move women through the program. If a participant is still incarcerated, she will join the next available cohort of women once she is released.

As part of the program, participants engage in a continuum of services, including work readiness, connections to educational opportunities and certificate programs and finally job placement. Individuals participate in workshops, tours, career exploration, financial planning and soft skills training. The program partnered with a local community college to provide career coaching on campus to help guide participants through the educational experience. The women in the group hold each other accountable and share successes to boost the group and help keep people on track.

CLACKAMAS COUNTY, OREGON

POPULATION: **394,972¹**



¹ Clackamas County, Oregon. U.S. Census Bureau State & County QuickFacts. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/41/41005.html>.

* Formerly the Workforce Investment Council.



To read the full report and the companion case studies, visit the Second Chances, Safer Counties website at: www.NACo.org/WorkforceAndReentry

SUCCESSSES AND OUTCOMES

Under Clackamas County's federal grant, the program met or exceeded each of its identified goals. Outcomes include:

- enrollment of 310 women in the program
- a 67 percent job placement rate and a 60 percent job retention rate
- 62 percent of participants achieve a degree
- participants' wages averaged \$11,000; and
- a 5 percent recidivism rate.

Although grant funding for the program has expired, the CWP is still committed to providing training and resources to women leaving the county jail. They are currently working in partnership with the Sheriff's Office and Community Corrections to identify additional opportunities to continue providing the intensive group services for these women.

"Clackamas Workforce Partnership (CWP) has a critical mission and place in our community and has made significant progress in workforce development over the past several years," says County Commissioner Martha Schrader. "Clackamas County appreciates the opportunity to partner with CWP to ensure our workers with barriers get the assistance they need as they re-enter the workforce."

LESSONS LEARNED

BUILD A STRONG CROSS-SYSTEMS PARTNERSHIP: The Clackamas County Sheriff's Office, Community Corrections and the Clackamas Workforce Partnership were able to develop a strong working relationship through persistence and open conversations. "You can't just assume that you know what another agency does or needs," said Bridget Dazey, Executive Director of Clackamas Workforce Partnership. "You can't shy away from these conversations, and you can't stop having the conversations when the money runs out. Through our partnerships, we now have one workforce system to serve our population rather than three disjointed programs, making us better able to support our residents."

MEN AND WOMEN SHOULD BE TREATED DIFFERENTLY: Research shows that men and women involved in the criminal justice system have different needs and different motivators to offend. Clackamas County also found this to be true when they tried to model a men's program after their women's program for employment reentry and were unsuccessful. They found that the programs needed to be composed differently and that all participants should be individually assessed for their needs and motivations to have the biggest impact.

EDUCATION IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS EMPLOYMENT: Through its efforts, Clackamas County found that it wasn't enough to place someone in a job. Participants who were most successful were those who engaged in skills training and educational programs. Those who participated and completed these programs emerged more self-sufficient and were more likely to have positive outcomes, including reduced recidivism.

FLEXIBILITY IS KEY TO WORKING WITH THIS POPULATION: Before starting this program, Clackamas County Community Corrections required individuals under supervision to obtain employment within 30 days of release from jail or prison. Once the program started, staff realized that many individuals would not be able to fulfill this condition of their probation due to individual circumstances such as behavioral health treatment needs. These individuals may need additional support before they can achieve these goals and Community Corrections was able to create two pathways for program participants to accommodate individuals who may need additional support to get on track.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Nastassia Walsh, MA
NACo Program Manager
nwalsh@naco.org

To read the full report and the companion case studies, visit the
Second Chances, Safer Counties website at:

www.NACo.org/WorkforceAndReentry

