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Contact: Michele Kane  
[michele.kane@calpia.ca.gov](mailto:michele.kane@calpia.ca.gov)

## CALPIA Launches Soft Skills Training for Incarcerated Individuals

FOLSOM – The California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA) plans to expand soft skills training to incarcerated individuals in its programs after the end of a successful Essential Skills for the Workforce (ESW) pilot program.

The ESW program introduces life and professional skills necessary to be successful in the workplace such as communication, enthusiasm and positive attitude, teamwork, networking, leadership, problem-solving, critical-thinking, conflict resolution, workplace ethics, creative thinking, time management, and flexibility and adaptability.

In September, The Prison Industry Board approved the implementation of the ESW pilot program for a select number of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) incarcerated persons assigned to CALPIA enterprises. Nearly 90 incarcerated individuals who participated in CALPIA have already successfully completed the program.

“While CALPIA provides technical skills that may get a graduate’s foot in the door, people skills are what keep doors open and help secure future job opportunities,” said Bill Davidson, CALPIA’s Acting General Manager and Executive Officer of the Prison Industry Board. “CALPIA has taken the extra step in our role in rehabilitating incarcerated individuals of introducing this program that helps people to communicate and collaborate effectively in the workplace.”

The ESW workbook was created by CALPIA’s Workforce Development Branch which included Staff Services Manager II and Workforce Development Trainer Regina Banks and Lead Workforce Development Coordinator and former CDCR Chief Deputy Warden Robin L. Harrington. Both developers worked with CALPIA staff and incarcerated individuals for their input and review.

“As we equip incarcerated individuals with technical work skills to reenter the workforce, we also must acknowledge that soft skills are an essential part to their success in not only getting a job, but keeping a job,” said Harrington. “This workbook was developed to highlight workplace expectations that are universal and apply to any trade, profession, and career.”

Building on research, common workplace practices, and curriculum for justice-involved individuals, the ESW workbook is self-paced and self-reflective. This pilot program aligns with the CDCR and CALPIA’s mission to facilitate the successful reintegration of individuals to their communities.

Incarcerated individuals are also introduced to interpersonal and social skills, self-awareness, managing emotions, managing stress, empathy in the workplace, and professionalism in the workplace.

The ESW pilot project involved approximately 10 to 15 participants at several institutions which included: California Correctional Institution, California Institution for Women, California State Prison Corcoran, Central California Women's Facility, Folsom State Prison and Folsom Women's Facility, Mule Creek State Prison, California State Prison Solano, and Valley State Prison.

Each person in the pilot program was monitored through a case management process in which workforce development coordinators, superintendents, and supervisors not only mentor pilot participants, but they also address questions and concerns in the application of soft skills both in pre- and post-work situations, conduct check-ins with participants and monitor progress.

CALPIA anticipates offering the ESW program to all participants in CALPIA job training programs starting next fiscal year.

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