

ALL HANDS ON DECK!

IMPROVING THE PATH OF REENTRY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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When an individual leaves prison, is he or she ready for what lies ahead? Is there someone on the other side helping him or her find housing, services, and employment through a coordinated plan? A new type of training offered by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) is digging into those questions and calling for an “all hands on deck” approach to help the formerly incarcerated.

NIC wants to improve reentry and workforce development outcomes across the nation and is partnering with various Correctional Industries and Departments of Corrections, including the California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA). NIC held the first in a series of Evidence-Based Workforce Development training workshops in Sacramento, CA this past June.





Sacramento Employment and Training Agency, Sacramento County Sheriff's Office, California Employment Development Department, Los Angeles Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services, Saint John's Program for Real Change, and The WestCare Foundation.

"We can't do this alone. It takes a lot of coordination between all these agencies and departments to ensure that formerly incarcerated individuals thrive and are successful," said CALPIA's General Manager Scott Walker. "The NIC training offers a way for all those stakeholders to meet face-to-face and to create successful employment paths for the person leaving prison."

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Dozens of representatives from parole, probation, local sheriff's offices, local workforce development agencies, and community-based programs came together for three days and participated in the training, entitled "Employment Retention: Principles and Practice."

NIC Correctional Program Specialist Pat Taylor led the class. "This training combines cognitive behavior intervention with motivational interviewing techniques," said Taylor. "It's more than just a training, it supports an entire community practice and is a major component of successful reentry."

Besides California, NIC is leading similar workshops in Ohio, Texas, Missouri, and New York.

"During this training we bring up scenarios and find solutions, for example, let's say an incarcerated individual leaves San Quentin State Prison and before he got there, he had a serious drug and alcohol problem and has no family support. Where does he go and what services are available to him?" added Taylor. "This is when the collaboration part comes together. If I am referring him to those services, I need to know what is required and what do they specifically offer. That is why it's important to have a warm hand-off."

Along with CALPIA, other training participants included the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) Division of Adult Parole Operations, Los Angeles County and Alameda County Probation Departments,





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The training provides the introductory concepts and skills for increasing employment retention rates among the justice-involved. Participants look at the continuum of care from incarceration to employment while identifying and coordinating evidence-based practices in the criminal justice system.

Besides examining the major criminogenic issues, training participants targeted real-life problems post incarceration.

“For instance, someone who is just released from prison and they have no transportation to get a job or their kids get sick and they can’t go to work—how are these problems being addressed in the community where they live?” said Taylor. “In many jurisdictions, we are seeing the benefit of having a navigator or organization providing support and helping the individual through the process of reentry.”

The training included video clips of real-life situations along with some role playing.

“We are looking at successful strategies from the handcuff key to the door key, who should be involved in this case model,” said Taylor.

Training participants worked out solutions on how to address an individual’s needs along with retaining employment.

CALPIA’s Workforce Development Specialist Regina Banks coordinated the NIC training in California. “It’s important for all these agencies and organizations to share information and begin to forge new networks with organizations focused on the same goal, getting to know



each other is key since it’s about relationships and collaboration,” said Banks.

The training created a networking roster in which all participants can utilize. In addition, NIC will continue to work with the five participating states to collect data that supports the principles and practices from the training.

“My Dad was a Correctional Specialist in the D.C. area, and I fondly remember him talking about the incarcerated individuals he would meet and how many didn’t have a family or anyone who cared for them growing up. This is my way of giving back,” added Taylor. “I want people to know there is opportunity for change. For those who didn’t have family or support, we need to provide that to them, we need to pay it forward. We also need to look at the continuity of care... to fix the criminal justice system... everyone has to figure out they have role to play.”