

**Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Office of Workforce Development**

Transcript of Webinar

Serving Ex-Offenders

Date: February 21, 2013

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

[Numbers in brackets indicate the approximate playtime, or time stamp, in the audio version]

SARAH BALLARD: Hi, this is Sarah Ballard of the Office of Workforce Development. This is the second webinar of our series: Serving Special Populations. Today's topic is Serving Ex-Offenders. Today we have with us Bishara Addison from Towards Employment, Randy Baker and Al Young from Alvis House, and Tom Hutter from the Office of Workforce Development. First up, we're going to have Bishara.

But before that, we just have a little bit of housekeeping. If you have not received a handout, we can send them to you after the webinar. E-mail us at the Workforce e-mail at jfs.ohio.gov if you'd like those handouts. Also this is the second in the series of Serving Special Populations. If you want the Certificate of Completion for completing all five, you would need to stay logged in throughout this webinar in order to count. If you are watching as a group, please e-mail the Workforce e-mail and we'll send you an attendance sheet, so that everyone that watches it will get credit.

Just so you know, the date of the next webinar is Thursday, March 21, 2013, 2:00-4:00 p.m. and the topic is Serving Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers and the WOTC Program. Your microphones are muted, so if you have questions, please type in your questions, and Angie Martin will read the questions to the speakers. Our first speaker, Bishara, she's not going to be taking the questions until the end of her presentation. So you can type in questions, but we won't read them to Bishara until she's done. I think that's it.

ANGIE MARTIN: Bishara, are you on?

BISHARA ADDISON: Yes I am.

ANGIE: Okay, it's all yours.

BISHARA: Is it possible to pull up the PowerPoint?

ANGIE: Do you have the PowerPoint on your computer?

BISHARA: It is not showing up the way that it was when we tested this.

ANGIE: Okay. If everyone could be patient, and we'll fix this pretty quickly. Hold on.

[33:55]

SARAH: We're going to change our presentation order, and Al Young and Randy Baker are going to talk about Alvis House and the services that they provide.

RANDY BAKER: Good afternoon. This is Randy Baker, and this is a video the DRC put together. It's a couple of years old at this point, but I think the information is still really good in it. It's showing you the reentry from the standpoint of the inmate coming out. It's just what kind

of issues they think they're going to have, and I think it just gives a whole new perspective to what we're going to be talking about today.

Video: [34:49 – 41:21]

Narrator: Over 95 percent of the prison population today will be released at some point in the future. Each year in the United States, almost 650,000 offenders are released from prison. The Department of Justice has estimated that two-thirds of released prisoners will be re-arrested within three years of their release. But the community's role in corrections has become a necessary component, and an essential ingredient to the success of offender reentry.

Man: The fear of the unknown, the challenges of unfamiliar surroundings and circumstances. The general inability to function and to survive outside of prison.

Woman: I anticipate some trouble as I reenter society, as far as the job situation, and hoping someone would give me a chance, as I check the application as a prior felon.

Man: I anticipate not being able to emotionally connect with my family and friends – going home to be with my daughter and my family, anticipate my friends.

Man: For me, what I fear is that job availability was slim for me, in terms of what I didn't want out of life, as opposed to what I needed and should have wanted out of life. So the barrier was myself.

Man: (Inaudible 37:57) and just having the community look at you like, not saying that people change and give them a chance. I want a job. I want somebody to take a chance, so that I can prove myself. That's all I want.

Man: Any program is going to be real crucial for me as I make my readjustment back into society.

Woman: I (Inaudible 38:37) my little girl to get a job and support her.

Woman: I have been gone for 13 years, and when I get home, I don't have any folks. So I'm (inaudible 38:47). I plan on finding a new life in local churches.

Man: First of all, my family, which is probably my number one resource for reentry. My family.

Man: I have a son now; he's 3 ½. I want to be a father to him; I need to be. I need to provide for him. Being a part of my son's life every day, not just visits, and letters, and things like that. That's my biggest goal.

Woman: You have to have communication with the individual that is incarcerated, because you have to make memories. I have memories now. My grandchildren have memories of growing up and seeing their uncle or being with him.

Man: When I get out of here, I just want to get my life back.

Man: I'd hope society would give me a second chance. I need a second chance.

Man: If I ever get out again, it'll be a whole different ball game, because I'll be that janitor. I'll take any job I can get, any job, and be glad I got it. I want to get to know my family. I don't know any of them, because I've spent my whole life in the joint. I just want to enjoy being out.

Man: My ideal setting when going home would definitely be an environment where there is a lot of family support. There's no good period of time where I'll have to adapt back into the world.

Woman: I'm the one who has to be different this time. I have to go out with a better attitude, a good attitude. So I'm the key in what needs to be different.

Man: America is the land of second chances, and when the gates to the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.

Narrator: Reentry is not a fad. It happens every day in the lives of hundreds of thousands of offenders returning to their communities.

End Video

[41:21] RANDY: So, hopefully, I gave you a little bit different perspective on things. Like Sarah said, we are from the Alvis House. We're a halfway house system in Columbus, Ohio. We're one of three major halfway house systems that are in the state of Ohio. Although most of our beds – we have over 325 beds, I think, at last count – in Columbus, both for men and women. We also have a facility in Dayton, the Cope Center. A facility in Toledo, Ohio Link. A facility in Lima, and at the VA Center in Chillicothe. So we have facilities in a lot of different places.

We also work with community clients, is what we call people who are not coming right out of prison. May have been in prison 10 years ago, but their offense is now keeping them from finding employment. That's probably the kind of people that you're, that you're seeing as well. There's 28,000 people in Ohio that are released every year from institutions. About half are under some kind of supervision, and the other half have really no one to, kind of, guide them.

I think that's probably the people that you're seeing coming in the One-Stops, and coming in to Job and Family Service Centers and are looking for help, because they don't really have somebody to supervise them. I want to take just a minute real quickly to talk about the kind of

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

things we do at the Alvis House, and then we'll get into some specific things that you can use when you're talking to employers, or working with this particular population. [43:23]

The main thing we do at our reentry center is the Job Readiness Program. We also are a Benefit Bank provider, and I'm sure I don't need to explain to this audience, how the Benefit Bank can assist our guys and women coming through. We have a clothes closet, as one lady said in her little testimonial. She didn't have any kind of clothes to interview in when she got out.

We see with both our men and women. We work with Dress for Success here in Columbus, but we also have an in-house clothes closet, so they can have some clothes to interview in when they're released. The big thing that most people use is our computer lab. We have a GED program that's in the evenings, in-house, as well. I'll touch on some of these a little more as we go along.

With provisions to help blindness, because, sometimes, the healthcare hasn't been what it should be. With division screens, aren't what they should be, but we really can do any kind of other referrals that need to be done. We do case management, really extensive case management, especially with our community client, and that links with pretty much everybody in the community that we think can help our population.

I think what makes us a little bit different than some of the other facilities in Columbus or around, is that we have four people who have gone through the Offender Workforce Development Specialists Training. It's through the National Institute of Corrections and the Department of Labor, with some funding through the Justice Department. They recognized that there needed to be a specialized training for people working with this population. So the National Career Development Association worked with them to develop an 18-month curriculum, and we had four people that are certified in that. I think that, in a private facility, we probably have more than any other facility, at least in the state, for sure.

Our Employment Readiness Program is, kind of, like what a lot of people are doing. It's called HIRE – it's Helping Reentry Employment Education. If you wanted to send some people to us, any Thursday at 9:00, there's an open orientation, you don't need any appointment. There are three parts to it. The first one is just basic job readiness – filling out an app, networking, how to present yourself when you're going out doing some job seeking. Just the real basic stuff.

Our second three hour class is focused almost entirely on interviewing, and, specifically, how to answer that question about your felony now. [45:58]

We tell people, you know they're going to ask you that, so why would you ever go to an interview and not know exactly how you're going to answer that? So, we help them, kind of, frame that, so that it causes the least amount of damage and can quickly get to what the positives of what they can bring to the table are.

Serving Ex-Offenders

Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

The last one is Resume Development class. All these are free, an hour or so. It's only nine hours; it's not a huge commitment of time. But we think, without those three basic things, they're really not ready to go job seeking yet.

Our community clients, at the end of the three days they're assigned a case worker, one of the Workforce Development Specialists, or someone within our staff. And we put together a road map for successful reentry. It may not just necessarily be employment. I think that you probably see that, too, where people come to your office, and somebody's referred them to you because they have a felony. You start doing a little bit of an intake, and you find out that they're homeless, they don't have transportation, and they don't really have any job skills, they don't have their GED, they have unresolved drug issues, and, oh, by the way, they're an ex-felon or an ex-offender.

Well, there's a lot of things that need to be addressed before they're ready to go to work. That's one of the things we try to do, and help you, too, is, look at all the other external things that are keeping them from finding employment and retaining employment. [47:28]

Then, phase three of our services is just follow up services. We'll see people as long as they need our help. We have over a hundred years combined experience working with ex-offenders. Like I said before, we have board certified OWDS trainers in our office. This is just a little look at our external computer lab. We have over 20 computers. People come in and do online job seeking, and they'll use the disk that we provided them with their resume – to upload it to do online job seeking. They'll pick up their e-mail. We also have a bigger lab, where we do our GED classes and some other specific employment training. GED is really vital, we stress that a lot.

There are some barriers that you can't get around. The fact that you have a felony is something that you really can't do anything about, at this point, other than learn how to work with it. But there are certainly a lot of barriers that this population has that can be removed, and having your GED is certainly one of those. We just read an article today, or some statistics today, where there's a fifteen percent improvement in job placement and retention on those offenders who get their GED while they're incarcerated or in a halfway house. You can see that recidivism rates really are affected by having a GED.

The recidivism rates in Ohio right now are about 31 percent, which I heard someone from TRC give a speech and they said, well, the good news is our recidivism rate is 31 percent. The bad news is our recidivism rate is 31 percent. It's still really high, but it's better than other states, and Ohio is doing some pretty progressive things to try to reduce those repeating offenders. [49:25]

Transportation is currently an issue with this population, especially in urban areas. They come out and they don't have any way to get to the jobs. We can provide them with a few bus passes we give free. But one of the things that you have to look at when you're working with this population is, do they have a way to get to and from the job? In Columbus, most of the

warehouses are outside of the bus line, and so, that creates a problem trying to get them to that type of work.

Just a quick summary before anybody should go out doing job seeking that you're working with – we want to make sure that they have just the basic job seeking skills in their toolbox, that they have a resume that will help get them an interview. Particularly, that they know how to answer the question about their felony in an interview, and know how to level the playing field to, kind of, offset the fact that they have this felony offense. That's, kind of, some of the things that we're going to talk about here as we go along.

Just a little bit about Alvis House, we're a non-profit agency. We've been doing this for 45 years, and, again, we serve residential clients in our halfway houses, but also community clients returning to Franklin County. There's about 3,000 ex-offenders every year that return from the prison system to Franklin County, but there are certainly more than that living in our community that are having trouble finding employment because of past felony offenses. We only work with those people, but they have to be able to show us that they have a felony offense to be eligible to receive services from us. [51:01]

So, what are some job development tools that you can use when working with employers? I know that's, kind of, the big thing. How do you get the employer to take a chance on a client? There's a lot of programs in Columbus that do a really good job of preparing the ex-offender to get back into the workforce.

The biggest problem is that the employers are not really ready to take them back, and so, it becomes frustrating. We see clients who have gone to the Urban League, they've gone to Impact, and they're gone to COWIC, and they've come to us, and they're getting a lot of the same kind of thing. They're just hoping that somebody along that line will have some connection for them to give them a chance. They all do excellent work to prepare the client. [51:53]

Some of the things that you can use, and you're probably all aware of these, but we just wanted to get into them. In particular is the Federal Bonding program that is available to employers, if the concern is over loss or shrinkage. Work Opportunity Tax Credit which was restarted. House Bill 337 was a legislation that was passed recently, and, actually, there's another speaker that's going to focus on that – which I'm really looking forward to hearing, because I don't know as much about it as we should. I'm really looking forward to hearing how that's all going to affect not only the clients that you're working with, but it's taking away some restrictions that employers may feel they have in hiring.

Then there's been some recent changes in Title VII interpretations, and how employers have to treat the ex-offender population when they're applying. If you are working with an employer, you can help them. You can say, look, you want to make sure that you're hiring policies are not setting yourself up to get yourself into trouble. [53:00]

Federal Bonding. It's a \$5,000 insurance policy that will – it's no cost to the employer or to the employee. It was put into place because some of the bonding companies were starting to have some issues with bonding ex-offenders for jobs where there was cash handling or material handling that they could possibly take home. So the Federal Government stepped in and created a bonding program. It's a very easy program to get put into place, the only thing that you have to have is proof of a felony, and you have to have a job offer. You can't put it into place before you actually get them the job. It's strictly an insurance policy against theft. So, if the person you're working with has a property charge, if they have a theft, a burglary, or robbery – some kind of property charge – you want to make sure that they understand how the Federal Bonding process works, and how you can help that employer get that put into place.

Here is a number that you can call toll free [1-877-US2-JOBS], there's an Ohio number, too, that you can get. I didn't bring it with me, but we actually have it set up with them to do it through e-mail. We'll e-mail them the information, and they'll call back to get the client's social security number. Actually, the number here, somebody just handed it to me from the background here. It's 740-845-3240. 740-845-3240. That's all done through the facilities down at Orient. The website to get more information is www.bondsforjobs.com. That's just a good website to go to. They will actually provide you with a disk, a video disk, if you want to be able to show it to employers when you're working them. [55:08]

One of the other tools is a Work Opportunity Tax Credit. I think it's been reduced now to seven categories of people from nine. Someone who's been convicted of a felony and has a conviction or release date within the last year is eligible for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. The employer can give as much as \$2,400 – there's a formula that they'll use, so it's pro-rated, based on the amount of hours being worked and the income that they make. They can make up to \$2,400. Veterans are actually eligible for double that amount, or the employer of a veteran. Because the formula is a little bit different and they can get up to \$4,800.

It's just another thing that your clients can use, or that you can use when you're talking to employers. Hey, did you know that if you hire this person from this disadvantaged population, and they work six months, you're able to take advantage of a tax credit, which is almost the same as having them pay part of their salary for that first six months. It's a little bit more difficult to apply for – there is an IRS form, a Department of Labor form, and they go to Job and Family Services. We're sure that the Job and Family Services people can help with, and we would certainly be willing just to tell you the addresses and show you how all that works.

One of the big things that this Title VII changes that have taken place, the Ohio Poverty Law Center out of Cincinnati has done quite a bit of work on this of late. It was never discriminatory to have a blanket policy that says, I'm not going to hire anybody with a felony offense. That has changed. It was a class action suit in New York, that made it all the way to the Supreme Court.

What the Supreme Court ruled was, because there was such a higher minority population that is incarcerated, by not allowing anybody who has previously been incarcerated to apply for a job, you're actually discriminating by race, and that is a Title VII violation. So these laws have all

changed. The more things that you can do when working with an employer, is to help them understand that, that they can't have that policy.

We talked about recidivism rates earlier, I talked about it. A lot of companies have a seven year policy. If you look at recidivism rates across the country, after three years, recidivism rates dropped down below six percent. So even if you could get them to change their policy to say, there's no reason why you really should have that seven year policy. I guarantee them that, if you ask them why they have a seven year policy, they'll just say, well, that's just because it's what it's always been.

It's probably tied to credit reporting, because there are some things in the Fair Credit Reporting Act that deal with ex-offenders, and I think that's probably where that came from. But if you look at all the statistics, everything shows that after three years it drops down to, really, probably less than what their non-ex-offenders, their rate of incarcerations going to be. [58:31]

ANGIE: I want to apologize for the delay in the screens, it's running a little slow. I think maybe it's because there's so many people may be logged on. I'm not sure, but there is a slight delay in the screen.

RANDY: So these are just a couple to test for Title VII. An employer's got to be able now to show that this screening criteria is consistent with business necessity – that there is some business necessity that you can't hire somebody with either any criminal offense or a particular criminal defense. Blanket exclusions are almost always considered, now, unlawful. You'll see more when we talk about the House Bill 337.

The employer has to be able to show that, because of this person's offense, it puts me at risk as an employer to hire that person. If you can't show that, if you can't show that business necessity, it's going to be unlawful. So many employers out there have policies that just say, we're not going to hire anybody that has a felony offense. As of right now, that can get them into some trouble with Title VII, and the Ohio Poverty Law Center is aggressively looking at companies that are doing that. [1:00:00]

In order to show that they are in compliance, you have to look at the nature of the conviction. Does the conviction and the gravity have something to do with the job? You have to also look at how much time has passed since that conviction. If it's been 20 years, it's going to be harder for that employer to say, I can't hire you because of this felony, if they've had 20 years of no contact with the criminal justice. [1:00:30]

Then, the nature of the job that's being sought. Obviously if you're working in a daycare, or if you have a drug charge, you're probably not going to get a job as a pharmacy tech. We're not being unrealistic with this. But employers must be able to make that connection to – the job duties to the offense of the conviction. Otherwise, if there was a legal battle, they're probably going to lose it at this point. That's one thing that you can do to really help your employers that you're working with. The Ohio Poverty Law Center will be happy to provide you with any of that kind of information to show to back that up.

Finally, just some tips on working with ex-offenders. One thing that I tell people that are not used to working with this population, just treat the felony offense just like you would any other barrier. If they don't have transportation, if they don't have housing, if they don't have whatever that barrier is that you would normally look at, don't make it worse, even though it's harder to work around. Don't make it more than what it is, it's just a barrier. Don't focus on the felony offense first, if other barriers aren't met.

Like I said earlier, all these other things need to be resolved first. One of the things that we tell our clients when we're working with them to try to change their mind set is, the felony is what you did, the felony is not who you are. You can change who you are. You can't change what you did, but you can certainly, and hopefully, have changed who you are. And that's what you want to sell, that's what you want them to sell to the employer. [1:02:10]

If we don't get anything else out of this, the one thing that we want to make sure we stress is, don't work from a list of employers who hire people with felonies. They never work. It's good intended, but it doesn't take into account what kind of skills they have, if they have openings. Somebody may hire an ex-offender and they may never hire another one, but now they're on a list and 28,000 people are showing up on their doorstep. They don't want to be on that list, and they call us all the time trying to get off of it.

The comparison I make is, if you had somebody you were working with, and they were left handed and they hired somebody, would you send everybody that was left handed to that same employer? Well, no, we wouldn't. But it's the same kind of logic. So, do the work to know your client, look at their individual skills, what talents they have. Some of these men and women coming out are very talented. They have a lot of skills that are sellable to employers. Develop personal relationships with employers. That's probably what Mr. Young does. The message here, today, is he really works hard on developing personal relationships, so when the right candidate comes along he can put them into that job. [1:03:28]

You also have to be prepared for damage control, because this population, as much as we want to help them, they will let you down, and they will do things that will cause that employer that you worked all that time to get to hire somebody, to not want to hire the next one. So you have to be prepared to have them give you a second chance, just like they were giving that employee a second chance, and continue to work with you. That's what I have. So are there some questions then? [1:04:02]

SARAH: Yeah, we'll go over them. Anyone out there that has questions for Randy or Mandy Baker, or Al Young, about what they do at Alvis House, you have to type them in so that Angie Martin could read them. I had a question about – Al, do you have any success stories that you can tell us about matching somebody up with an employer?

AL YOUNG: Well, after doing this for, like, this was what I was telling you, this is my 33rd year of doing this, I have a lot of success stories. I think that anybody can come to a success story, because they're making an attempt to change their life. There are numerous men and women out

Serving Ex-Offenders

Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

here that I've worked with, and Randy has worked with that are doing exactly – most men and women come out of the institutions, want to get back. We have a lot of women and men who are actually doing social work all through Columbus and all through Ohio. I don't want to single just one person out. There's just numerous success stories that we have out here, you know.

RANDY: There's a lot of different ways that qualify success. I mean, somebody that has a good job, and owns a house, and driving a car. I mean, for some of us, that might be success, but for somebody who's managed to stay clean for three years, and get reunited with their family, and not re-offend – for us, those are success stories as well.

Man: I have a question. You had mentioned during the presentation about the National Career Development Community. How can someone, one of the local One-Stops, obtain that training?

RANDY: I did that actually through the Department of Corrections, was – who was, kind of, promoting that and sponsoring that. I'm not sure that they're doing that anymore. At least, DRC isn't. But they're still offering training. The NCDA is still offering training, and if you go to their website at National Career Development Association website, that's in Oklahoma, and pull up the Federal Workforce Development Specialists, that will be able to tell you how to go about getting that training. I'm actually an instructor on that. I haven't done any instructing for a while, so, I know they've, kind of, slowed it down a little bit. [1:06:42]

Man: Now, you being an instructor – would it be possible, say a local area were to contact you, about providing some hands on training. Is that something that you do as an instructor?

RANDY: That's probably above my pay grade. Well, yeah, certainly we can find out next week. I have access to all of the materials and things, so we can certainly look into that for you.

Man: The questions they had about (inaudible 1:07:04), you mentioned road maps during your presentation. What exactly does road map, how he developed it?

RANDY: Well, I think you have to look at – and I can have Al answer this – but I think you have to give a first look at all those issues that will keep somebody from not being able to retain employment, and make sure those are all done first. Then you have to do some assessments to see not only what their likes are, but what their skills are – so that you can get them placed in the right kind of job. We use that on our interest profile, or, especially, to help them look at career paths in the state. I know I want to go back to school, but I really don't know what I want to do, and maybe it's because I'm not familiar with the job market.

So, we'll use that to just, kind of, give us a base line of where to start looking, and then help them, kind of, develop. This seems like the kind of field that I would like, or, what kind of training does it take? Then once they're employed, once we get them to the point that they are getting some additional training, then everything is focused on retention – job retention and job coaching. And keep them in that job long enough to be able to save up some money, and to be able to get back to school. Right now, especially with some of the WIA contract's I think we're

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

(inaudible 1:08:18) retention. And people are recognized that it's easier to get a job than it is to retain a job. We're doing a lot more focus on the retention side of employment. [1:08:27]

AL: Let me add to that; the road map is the tool. One, the client must know how to do an application. The client must know all his pertinent information. So the key for all this, in all my years, is that I've prepared a plan. The plan is how to administer a question, how to do an interview. We give them a map of the city. We will provide them with bus passes. But the biggest thing is, they have to identify what type of work they want to do, first and foremost. Most men and women look into survival jobs. What I've been stressing in my last few years is not a survival job, but a career.

We try to get them to identify what they want to do, and that's really important because most of our men and women are on probation, parole, and they need to identify with that, because a lot of them are stipulated to get jobs within a certain amount of time. But with a plan in place, starting today, you have to identify with your skills – we talk about transferable skills, adaptive skills. So we've got to make sure we get them to identify what their game plan is, for most of our men and women. That's a good road map. [1:09:40]

RANDY: One final question.

MAN: The mention of transportation, for a local area that doesn't have the funds to buy bus passes, what kind of recommendations do you have?

RANDY: We don't have funds to buy bus passes, either.

AL: Well, just with our one contract. Now we have a contract with COWIC in Columbus, Ohio – is the joint program and, about a weeks' worth of bus passes? Yeah about a week's worth.

RANDY: Yeah, I would say those people outside of urban areas like Columbus are just going to have to look at what kind of community resources are out there. Carpooling – a lot of times, once they get to work they're able to find transportation. It's just getting started with them. It's a huge barrier, and it's so big, sometimes, their driver's license is suspended and they're not able to get their driver's license. But they actually get their PO's telling them they have to get a job, they don't have any way to get there. It's just, kind of, a vicious cycle.

ANGIE: All right, we have several questions on the screen here. I know a lot of you probably have a lot of the same questions, so I'll just, kind of, scroll through some of them, and, hopefully, Matt can help us answer them. The first thing, they want to know if there are services like this, maybe available in Lima? I guess that's probably, what, Allen County?

AL: Yes, (inaudible 1:11:30). We have a reentry center there. We can provide that information to you. If they call our main number in Columbus, area code 614-252-8402, they can give them that number for the reentry center in Lima.

Serving Ex-Offenders

Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

ANGIE: So are there are several ones throughout the state, then, that are similar to what you, what you have here at the Alvis House?

RANDY: The bigger cities usually have them. Smaller communities, they really don't have the resources or the ability to do that. Cleveland certainly has them, Cincinnati, Dayton. We have somebody in there. Our residential people don't all stay in Columbus, they go back all over the state. So we'll look to the ones to Job and Family Services, United Way (inaudible 1:12:24) to refer them to. [1:12:26]

AL: Good program in some of the larger cities is the Urban League. The Urban League has a program – inside the Urban League – that will work with ex-offender population. If you know of the Urban League in the larger cities, that's a good program to go to, and they can help a lot of ex-offenders also.

ANGIE: How do you encourage employers to hire restored citizens or ex-offenders?

RANDY: Well, you just have to show them the benefits. They are really looking at it from a negative, and I think if you show them how hard working, how willing they are to work. Some employers look at us just like a free agency that can supply them with people, they don't have to pay a fee to come in and interview, match people, and do that.

I think it's, really, you have to develop that good of a relationship. Is there some kind of training that you can provide any other time, so that they're already prepared? We do that with Tim Horton's here. It really is developing that one-on-one relation. Getting the right person in there the first time, that doesn't mess it up for everybody else, and then just gets you to work with them to see what their needs are, and show them the benefits, instead of just talking about the risks.

Which, one of the things with the bonding is that, 99 percent of all of the bonds that were issued last year, no claims were filed against them. I think if you look at that as compared to what shrink is normally in retail, they probably are less likely to get something because they know everybody's looking at them. I think it really is just developing that personal relationship. [1:14:07]

AL: I'm going to take this a little further. Like I said my experience is a little different than Randy's. What I look at is most employers want (inaudible 1:14:12) bonds. We look at us with having clients in our case load, we tell the employer, it is hidden job market, the ideal the ex-offender. But if you hire one of our men or women we do, we call, what we call, a follow up.

We go do a thirty day follow up, a three-month follow up, and then a six month follow up. So with that in mind, if an employer knows that, they can always contact myself, and any of the other workers there at the reentry center that kept a liaison, so that if they're having any problems with that employee, they have a contact person that they can talk to, to resolve any problems that they might be seeing come forth.

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

ANGIE: I'm sorry. Can you give the bond website again? I know it's actually included in the PowerPoint presentation, but some of you haven't received that yet. If you haven't received it, just go ahead and type in your name and e-mail address and we'll get that out to you after the presentation. I have it right here.

RANDY: It is www.bondsforjobs.com. It's through a company called the McLaughlin Company, that's based out of the Washington, D.C. area. And that's who you actually get the bond through. [1:15:35]

ANGIE: Okay, someone's asking, how do you recommend listing prison work experience on the resume?

AL: Well there's different ways. What we have taught over the years, and many might have another theory on it, we always tell them to put State of Ohio. And if you come from a federal prison, we always have them put DOP Bureau Prisons. A lot of employers have, thankful, that a lot of clients actually worked for the State of Ohio. But what that does, that opens up a door of communications when you see State of Ohio. They'll automatically ask you, why did you leave the State of Ohio? That just gives our client the chance of going into, well, ma'am, sir, I was convicted of a felony and I worked for London, I worked for Orient. So that's what we teach there at reentry center.

ANGIE: Can an ex-felon secure a copy of their background report, and if so, how would you go about doing that?

RANDY: You can pay for it. Usually at the DMV's, you can pay for what's called a BCI report. What we always tell our people, if you've ever been turned down for a job, and they say, we ran a background check and, because of what's on the background check, we can't hire you. They're required by law to provide you with a copy of whatever they used to make that negative determination, and they have to provide it to you free.

Now they may balk about it, but it's in the Fair Credit Reporting Act information, and so, one, you can find out if there are any mistakes on, because there is huge mistakes on BCI checks. It's supposed to only show what you were convicted of, and a lot of times it's what you were charged with, or, if you have a common name, there could be stuff on there that doesn't even belong to you. It also will show an employer's is used in court (inaudible 1:17:28) where the local clerk of courts website, public access site, to do a background check, which they're not allowed to do, or supposed to do, because that's not a conviction report.

That's just any contact you've had with the justice system, even if you were found not guilty of whatever the charges were. So you can pay for one, but we always really stress with our people that if they say – and you have to, kind of, listen to what they tell you – but if they say, “We ran a background check and, because of what turned up on the background check, we can't offer you a position.” – they have to give you a copy of it. [1:18:04]

ANGIE: Does the Alvis house actually cater to just men, or is it men and women?

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

RANDY: Yes it does.

ANGIE: Men and Women?

RANDY: Yes.

ANGIE: And women? Okay. Are there any other programs like that, you know, out there surrounding within Ohio, or just Franklin County programs?

AL: You've got Cleveland, you got one in Cincinnati, you got one in Mansfield, and you got one in Lima. They're all over.

ANGIE: They're in the bigger cities?

AL: Yeah. What they should do is contact the DRC, which, if they call this number here, 614-466-2000, that's the general information for the State of Ohio. And just tell them what they want, they will direct it to DRC, and they'll tell them where all these community based programs are. No more halfway houses, they call them community based programs.

ANGIE: We had someone ask about setting up those community centers within their area. How would you suggest that be presented? Like, can you briefly give us something quick on that?

RANDY: Yeah. There's a lot of regulations and lots of restrictions, then zoning. It's not something that you can do really easy. To do a reentry center, if it's not involved housing, anybody can do that. As long as you weren't going to house them – you have the staff – anybody can set up a reentry center and work employers. I just think the thing with our program is that, because we only work with ex-offenders, the Urban League has a program, Impact has a program.

Lots of places have programs, but they work with a multitude of disadvantaged population. Where, with us, they know when they come in, everybody else is in the same boat, that they are, and they tend to be a little more open and honest and work with us a little bit more. If you wanted to set up just a non-residential reentry center, I don't think there would be any regulation against that. [1:20:00]

AL: I tell everybody that the biggest thing is that you've got to educate the community that you live in. Education is real important. A lot of people over the years didn't get to know about Alvis House, so they didn't know about the Alvis House Program. Education is real important. I tell everybody the biggest thing that, years ago, when I first started, I always wanted to be a temporary employment agency for ex-offenders. Because, the more people that know about this population, who we call the hidden commodity, out here, is that employers need to know the disadvantages and advantages.

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

There are more advantages in hiring this population, because, while they're in Alvis House, the maximum is six months, they have to work. You know, the other thing there with that would be, they have to stay clean. Anybody that's in Alvis House, or either on probation or parole, they have to work, they have to stay clean. So why not hire somebody with those stipulations, you know.

ANGIE: Good point. One of the things you mentioned – educating your population and stuff. Senate Bill 337 and House Bill 86, how is that being communicated to some of the employers? If not only to have us just to piggyback off of that, the blanket exclusion to employers. How are those employers educated on that? [1:21:16]

RANDY: There's actually going to be another full presentation on House Bill 337, and we'll get to that. We just work with them on Title VII, as we work individually with the employers. The Ohio Poverty Law Center in Cincinnati, if you just Google them they can provide you with material.

SARAH: Okay, we need to move on to our next speaker, and we're going to try Bishara Addison from Towards Employment. Angie is going to see if Bishara can show her PowerPoint.

ANGIE: (Inaudible 1:22:23). I'm going to have to bring it up, it's not giving her a different access.

ANGIE: Bishara, for some reason, we're not able to bring up your PowerPoint. So can you hear us?

BISHARA: Yes I can, and I don't necessarily need it. I know that you did send out a number of attachments, so if individuals would be willing to pull up the attachment on Towards Employment, I can go through the presentation that way.

ANGIE: Sounds good. We actually have the presentation on screen on our end, so if you want us to flip through, you can just tell Sarah, like, next slide, or whatever, and she'll go ahead and flip through for it. Is that good?

BISHARA: That works for me.

ANGIE: All right. [1:23:44]

BISHARA: Well, all right. Thank you so much, everyone, for being patient. I just want to thank everyone for giving us the opportunity to share some of our experiences around workforce development, for those who have been involve in the criminal justice system. So we definitely appreciate this opportunity. So if you're looking at the first slide, you see that Towards Employment has a single focus, and that is – jobs. We believe that individuals can achieve and maintain self-sufficiency if they are given a chance to work and gain employment.

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

What I'm covering today, based on our conversations around workforce development, is to use programs and also a unique way that we leverage our local One-Stop. I noticed someone had a question for Alvis House around, kind of, reentry One-Stops, and even, kind of, reentry sites. And I definitely think that will be of interest to the people on the call.

So, if you go onto slide 2. Just to give you a sense of what we've done and how we have provided services. Towards Employment has a really rich history in providing services for adults with barriers to employment. We originally started off as an agency that provided supportive services, and our programs have really evolved since 1976. In 2004, we actually added-in comprehensive services for those who have criminal backgrounds.

So, if you notice one of our last bullets on that slide, or our second bullet, we talk about recidivism of our grads. I just want to mention that we track recidivism for those that have been released within three years, and then track them one year from their workshop completion. So 5 percent actually reflects the recidivism of individuals, or our graduates who have been released within three years of coming to us. [1:25:37]

If you go on to slide 3. We have four key program areas and those include: preparing for a job, getting a job, keeping the job, and then moving into a career. The moving into a career piece was actually added in 2010 as a part of our strategic plan. One of the goals was to address issues around the fact that our wages for individuals were stagnating around \$8-\$9 per hour. We recognized that that is not a living wage. So we wanted to begin focusing on advancement, and I'm going to talk a little bit later about what those services specifically include for those who have criminal backgrounds.

If you move on to slide 4. We're an outcome-driven organization and we had some really great outcomes in 2012, as you can see on this slide. How do we actually pay for all of these great services? We have some really key contracts with our local office of reentry, and then we also have funding from our local Workforce Investment Board, which I'll talk about a little bit later.

We agree on performance benchmarks that we consistently meet or exceed, and we also complement some of those core services with supportive services. One of the unique services that we provide on-site is, actually, legal services. For example, in 2011, we discharged over a million dollars in debt for some of our participants. [1:27:06]

The last bullet here on that slide is retention and advancement. This is referencing a program that is fee for service, and it works with employers to have low wage or entry level employees. The goal is to reduce turnover by providing intervention services where current workers may be struggling to keep their jobs, and also helping individuals think about what they need to do to have a career ladder within those companies. So that's where we, kind of, originally started off with advancement, and that thinking has really evolved now to, how do we think about advancement for all of our programs, and not just that fee for service program. [1:27:43]

If you move on to slide 5. I'd say a lot of our services are very similar to the services that Alvis House is providing. If you look at slide 5, we have a four week job readiness workshop, and it

Serving Ex-Offenders

Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

really models the behavior that our employers expect. This workshop is assumed from an organization called Cleveland Works, in 2004, and we, basically, inherited their staff and all of the program practices around serving ex-offenders.

Within this workshop, we really try and model certain behaviors. I can give you some examples: around attendance and disciplinary policy use. We expect individuals to scan in and out. Our attendance policy – if individuals missed a certain amount of days, they will be asked to leave that particular workshop and invited to start the next one. We have some really good reasons for doing it that way. We need to know that you could be successful in this kind of structure, because that's what our employers expect. Our workshop participants, they become, kind of, like a family, and they're very close. It is important that everyone is participating and contributing equally to this four-week workshop.

We have an employer advisory board, and we operate in, kind of, a dual customer fashion. We know that we need to consider employer expectations, and, so, our employer advisory board often reviews our curriculum and provides feedback. The way they view it is that the background is one issue, but it doesn't matter if someone has a background, as much as it does that they're otherwise qualified.

So we need to know that our participants, regardless of what their background is, are ready to be successful on the job. We also use role plays in our workshops, and basically take abstract activities and then apply them to the practical. It really gives our trainers an opportunity to see our participants engage in team building, and also work on their communication skills. [1:29:43]

Then we also have this job readiness check list. It's very similar to what – I guess – to what Alvis House called a road map. It's basically a series of activities that we expect our participants to complete each week before they graduate and start our job club. It's something that's really important for our participants to do this, because it really helps us to know that they are progressing in the right way, and that we're actually meeting them where they are, and working through any issues that they might be having.

We also have employers that work with us in terms of doing job shadowing, they may do some on-site recruitment. We've actually had a number of employers come to Towards Employment and interview people on-site, which is always really great. Then, we also have company volunteer days. So companies might come in – a number of their staff will come in – and do mock interviews for our workshops. It's important for the company, because their staff are actually giving back to the community. It's really valuable for our participants, because they're actually getting real experience with them, when they could be potentially interviewing with.

We also have successful graduates who come back and talk to the workshops, and we have guest speakers who come in and talk about work/life issues, because, once you're unemployed and you become stable in a job, there's a number of other issues that go along with that, such as how to manage your budget, manage your finances. We definitely want to set our participants up for success. [1:31:14]

Serving Ex-Offenders

Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

If you can turn to slide 6. Our training focus is pretty self-explanatory, we work on self-skills and life skills. So many of the things Alvis House mentioned around completing a resume, interviewing with confidence, addressing a criminal background in an application or interview, setting up an e-mail account, working on actually having an emphasis on behavior and thinking change. Then, also, career planning, and short- and long-term workforce goals.

If you go on to slide 7. We have some other program elements, and that includes computer and financial literacy, supportive services, work experiences, and we have GED on-site. We have a (inaudible 1:31:58) member who actually helps with the computer and financial literacy piece. In terms of supportive services, we have limited dollars, and I think everyone in the non-profit sectors is probably facing that. We do assess to see what our participants can't get, or do, on their own, and then we supplement whatever their needs are with what we can provide, such as bus passes, help an individual get new uniforms, or whatever they need to actually start a job.

I know that something Alvis House mentioned with having a clothing closet, we also have a clothing closet on-site, and we also work with Dressed for Success. We definitely try to make sure that our participants are dressed properly for the interview, and we also recognize that they might need more than one outfit if they're working their first week. They probably can't wear the same thing every day, so they might need two or three outfits. [1:32:48]

We also have these legal referrals. This is a really unique part of our program, that we have legal on-site, but our participants can get legal referral in the fourth week of the workshop, except for emergencies. So if there is something that needs to be taken care of right away, we can definitely make an exception. All of our participants get a background check. I know Alvis House provided some really great information around why it's so important to actually know what's in your background.

Employers are looking at things that, you know, are just charges, and not actually convictions. There is often a lot of mistakes in background checks, and so we need to know what employers are going to see. And our participants need to know what our employers are to see. Sometimes, they don't know everything that's in their background. It's really important for us to see that, so that we can coach them on how to address it.

Also, this offers opportunities for sealing. We can seal some of these, or erase some of these charges that have not led to convictions. It gives us an opportunity to, kind of, clean up their record. Just so you know, we don't screen for convictions, but, just because we do a background check, we accept everyone. We have individuals who have very low level convictions to very violent convictions. We don't screen by a conviction. However, we do want to be able to make sure that we're giving the right coaching to help someone address it. [1:34:05]

We have case managers that have had benefits training, and they also know of resources on continuing education. And we partner with Lakewood ABLE and we're able to have GED on-site in the afternoons. Basically, it's an opportunity for our participants in the workshop to go right across the hall, go to their GED classes, and, that way, they're not going to another site.

We are definitely leveraging a number of different partners to make sure that we're really having these comprehensive program elements.

If you would go on to slide 8. In terms of employer engagement and job retention, I think Alvis House did a great job of covering this again. We have dedicated job development staff who identify employment prospects. Again, we have the dual customer approach, and we really want to focus on advancement for our participants. The way we think about this is, job development is key. We need to build trust with employers, because we're not just serving ex-offenders.

The employers are our clients, too, and they often have needs, and we have to try and fill it. Otherwise, they're not going to come back to us. We need to make sure that we have a pipeline, or a pool of people, with skills, so that we have people to actually send to interviews when we get job orders. It definitely takes time to build a pipeline, and one of the added benefits of partnering with our local One-Stop is that their funding has allowed us to have a second job start.

We have two workshops happening every month that are happening two weeks off from each other. That way we're not having leakage of participants who have to wait the next month to actually start a workshop. They can actually start, like, if they miss the first workshop, they can start in the next two weeks.

We also want to make sure that we have the right fit. A bad fit can not only burn a relationship with an employer, but can also deter an employer from hiring someone else with a criminal background, regardless if they're going through our programing. So making sure that we actually have a really good candidate for that employer is really important, and that's part of the reason why we have this very structured workshop. We need to know that, if we're going to go to bat for you, that you're going to be able to perform on the job. [1:36:13]

Towards Employment also has this advancement academy. I think, I think I mentioned earlier that we have some specialized programing for advancement, and this is new. Our academy basically targets graduates who have been working and staying in their jobs for at least six months, and that have expressed interest in advancement. The service mix really varies, based on the individual starting point. For some, it means academic remediation; for others, it's technical training; and others, career exploration, job shadowing and mentoring.

In terms of services that are available, we have a formal orientation when individuals can learn about the different aspects of the program. If they're interested in enrolling, they have to submit an application. If they're accepted, we have services that include career exploration, customized career coaching, skill enhancement – which is continuing education – work experience, financial literacy, leadership development, and soft-skill development, with an emphasis on how to advance. We have a really strong relationship with College Now, so we can do a really hard referral there. We have a contact, so we send individuals to a person, and they can really help them think about financial aids.

We also have group sessions, and they happen once a month, and it's really a social activity. It's also an opportunity for skill building, and the topics that we cover in these workshops is based on

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

participant surveys. Individuals are basically telling us what they want to hear and they're active in their own process towards advancement – and not just us mandating them, come to a program. It's something that they're really interacting with. [1:37:55]

If you go on to slide 9. This is just a breakdown of the individuals that we're serving. It probably comes to no surprise, because it reflects, kind of, some of the demographics of some of individuals coming into the Justice System in Cleveland. We have mostly African American, mostly male, most have more than one conviction, and some have violent convictions.

Something I really want to highlight about who we're serving is that individuals are opting to come to our programs. It's a walk-in program, no one is mandated, and that's really important, because our program is four weeks unpaid and it's a very serious commitment. You need to be ready for that commitment. One of the questions that you might be asking yourself is, what happens if you can't handle a four week workshop intensely from 9:00 – 4:00? Well, I'll get to that in a little bit.

So if you move on to slide 10. This just goes to show some of our outcomes, specific to our reentry population. In terms of our job placement, the top six industries that have really been hiring from us are shipping and receiving, food service, environmental services, industrial laundry, and that's, in part, because the relationship that we have with this organization called Ever Green, which is doing some really innovative things in Cleveland. Customer service, and then, light manufacturing, such as machining and welding.

We have high retention and we, kind of, attribute that to, first of all, the walk-in piece. People are coming to us when they are ready, they do not have active addictions, and they're not being forced. What I mean by active addictions is that, we're not necessarily turning people away. We do ask in our assessment if someone has an active addition or if they're actively using. If they are, then we will do a hard referral to Recovery Resources, another one of our partners.

If you have an active addiction, you're not ready for a four-week workshop, and you're not ready to start a job, because that needs to be dealt with prior to starting employment. We definitely will invite you to come back, but we definitely will want you to, kind of, resolve whatever that is before you come to us, or at least begin resolving it. Then, we also have really strong case management. We have staff that really follow our participants even after they graduate. [1:40:10]

If you go on to slide 11. We have some really key success factors. Many of our program staff actually have a criminal background themselves, that's about 60 percent. Three have actually graduated from our programs. We emphasize structure and accountability, not just with our clients, but also with ourselves. We have a strong data management system, and we have clear expectations of staff in terms of how many times they're supposed to contact our graduates, and also making sure that they're putting that information into our data management system.

That's where the accountability comes in, because we can have a supervisor look at our management system and say, hey, we noticed that this particular client has been on the job for,

Serving Ex-Offenders

Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

let's say, three months, but I don't see a case note actually checking in to see how they're doing. That needs to happen. So that way we're actually accountable within ourselves.

We also emphasize behavior change, long-term retention, which we've talked about. We have the legal services, and in these critical partnerships, there are so many organizations that we work with. And the work that we do does not happen in an silo, so if everybody wasn't working together, then this workshop wouldn't have the same kind of value that it does.

If you would move on to slide 12. Again, partnerships are key, and so, some of our main funding sources as I mentioned earlier, come from the Office of Reentry, our Workforce Development Board, United Way, and then, we also raise thirty percent of our costs from philanthropic sources on our own. We're actually doing outreach with foundations and actually asking them to support our program.

Some of our main program partners is the North Star Neighborhood Reentry Resource Center in Oriana, which is also a halfway house in the Cleveland area, but I'm pretty sure they have a site in Akron, as well. I know there's someone on the call from Oriana, so they might want to correct me. But they've been really an instrumental partner, and I'm going to spend the last third of my presentation talking about that partnership. Obviously, Employment Connections, which is our local One-Stop in our Workforce Investment Board. LMM a recovery resources, AmeriCorps, and Lakewood ABLE, which does our GED.

Go on to slide 13. Our partnership with Employment Connections. This is such a critical partnership. Just to give you sense or a context of how we have really furthered this relationships as it relates to reentry. In 2009, our Workforce Investment Board restructured how they were going to deliver services. Focusing on services from the employers, and then services for job seekers. Job seekers are going to be most successful if they're ready to respond to job opportunities at that time.

Within the reentry population, individuals are coming to us with a range of issues. Some are – the only barrier they have to employment is just their background. And some have a number of other barriers, as well, that have to be resolved before they're job ready. Responding to job opportunities in real time is not always going to be appropriate for someone who's got some additional barriers. When (???) released a general RFP, Oriana wanted to integrate employment services at North Star and the other ones that run North Star. Towards Employment obviously has some really intense experience around working with employment as it relates to reentry. So the two of us, Towards Employment and Oriana, responded to a general RFP. Well, it took some initiative to propose something specialized for a target population.

Our response focused on a specific subset, obviously being ex-offenders. Employment Connections recognized some things about our proposal that they liked. They realize that having off-site services was important with services that would cater to ex-offenders, a location where non-employment needs could also be met, and also where individuals could still prepare for Employment Connection's own activities. [1:44:17]

Serving Ex-Offenders

Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

A decision was made to fund the proposal by Towards Employment and Oriana, leveraging the North Star site that was somewhat invested in from the Office of Reentry. But historically, there was a significant investment from Oriana in the North Star site. They really made that place, really, what it is today, which is a really great drop-in center.

Employment Connections, I would say, was also our real partner in helping coming up with an agreement on how employment services at North Star would be delivered, and how it could be a gateway to Employment Connection services. The end result is that Towards Employment leverages the drop in nature of North Star. It helps prepare clients that are coming in to North Star to be a pipeline of candidates into Employment Connections, and then we make sure that they're fed into that pipeline by helping people register with Employment Connections. So it's definitely, kind of, I'd say, the front door to what we would call the WIA system. We have core services at North Star, and then we have intensive services, which is our network's first success program that I have been describing already. [1:45:31]

If you go on to the next slide, I think this is pretty self-explanatory. North Star, one of the reasons why it was such a great location to, kind of, do this pipeline into Employment Connections for ex-offenders, is because they offer so many great services. If I were to talk about all of those services, then nobody would ever get off of this call, so I'm going to skip over that and move onto slide 15.

This, kind of, just gives you an overall sense of the demographics coming into North Star, and then you'll see at the bottom, the top three service needs or services request from North Star are around birth certificates and IDs, employment, and clothing. Towards Employment definitely appreciates the fact that we could, kind of, use what we do best in a site where there is definitely a need. [1:46:20]

If you go to slide 16. This is a listing of the types of services that we offer at North Star. Basically, the one off workshops, the job club, placement and retention service, the supportive services. Any job development that happens at Towards Employment, those job orders are shared with anyone who's in the job club at North Star. So they benefit even if they're not going into our four week workshop and they're doing some of the lighter touch services at North Star, they still benefit from all of our job development.

In terms of what we assess for, because we do assess to see if it's better for them to do a start at North Star, or if it's better for them to do a start at Towards Employment and our four-week workshop. One, we do a truncated orientation of what Employment Connections goes over, and we let them know what expectations they should have, and what resources they have available. We look at the type of conviction that they have, the reasons why an individual has struggled in getting or keeping a job, we go over their job readiness, the time they have available to commit to a program. If they have any active addictions, and if they have any other barriers. We also have this legal clinic that we coordinate once a month at North Star.

Something that we do, which is part of our job readiness checklist, is that we enroll everyone in the PC Recruiter, which is this an online tool that Employment Connection uses to connect

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

employers with qualified job seekers, and also, kind of, make sure those job openings become available to anybody who's in the system. [1:48:01]

So we help individuals create an account with PC Recruiter, and we also make sure that our participants know when they're having on-site recruitment events. They're still getting all of the information that they would be getting at Employment Connections, however they're getting it at a location that is really tailored to their needs.

If you go on to the next couple of slides. We've had graduates who really appreciate the experience of the four-week workshop. Then we've had employers who really appreciate the fact that we're giving them qualified candidates, individuals who have really gone above and beyond earning a second chance. Those who deserve a second chance have tons of talent. Whenever I do mock interviews in our workshops, there's so much talent in the room. It's definitely great when employers tell us how much they appreciate the fact that we were able to do some job development for them and it was a good match.

That's pretty much my presentation. I'd be happy to take some questions. [1:49:02]

ANGIE: Bishara can you provide us with your website address and your contact information? I have a lot of people requesting that please.

BISHARA: Oh absolutely. I can type it in and then it can be e-mailed out to everyone.

SARAH: We can send that out to people afterwards, after the webinar, or we can show our last slide, we can show your contact information. So there's no reason to give us those. Well, do we have time for a couple of questions for Bishara?

BISHARA: Oh yes, I definitely want to take questions.

ANGIE: Well, one of the questions was your location, they wanted to know if you were available on the Cleveland bus line or not?

BISHARA: We are. We're available on the Health Line which runs down, kind of, the Euclid corridor. We definitely know that, sometimes, coming downtown can be a hike, because we serve many of the eastside neighborhoods. But not all of them are directly close to the downtown. At least not within, like, ten minutes. Oriana, their North Star site, is actually right across the street, and it's off East 55th and I can also make sure that everyone has the address of North Star.

ANGIE: Do you guys only serve Cuyahoga County residents, or do you do the surrounding counties also? [1:50:31]

BISHARA: That's a really interesting question. So, in terms of our main programing, we're serving individuals in Cuyahoga County, mostly the Cleveland area. However, we have a new program, and this is part of our focus on advancement called Work Advance. It is a study, we

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

have funding partially from the Social Innovation Fund, and partially from the Fund for Economic Future, which focuses on helping individuals 200 percent below the Federal Poverty Level advance into healthcare and manufacturing pathways. Now, obviously, in healthcare there's not a whole lot we can do around job development.

Because there's so many legal barriers on the state and federal side to keeping people from having jobs in those fields, if they have a criminal background. On the manufacturing side, however, a lot of our job development is available to those with criminal backgrounds. So even though we're not recruiting individuals with criminal backgrounds for that program, we do have many people with backgrounds in that particular program. It operates in Cuyahoga County, so from our main site at Towards Employment, but also, we partner with Compass, and they're located in Youngstown. If anybody is in the Youngstown area, I can definitely get you some information. I know that we're doing some recruitment now. [1:51:51]

ANGIE: What were the tools and resources employed to circumvent the issue of low wage employment?

BISHARA: Yes, that's a great question. I mean, I would say our average wage is a little bit above \$9.25, and I think that our focus on advancement, which our Advancement Academy is new, and our Work Advance Program is new. Both of those programs are geared towards the fact that we don't want to be stuck at \$9.25, because we know it's not a living wage. We know a lot of our participants have child support orders and they have to pay them.

I think we're still waiting to see some results, but I do know that in Work Advance, wages are getting really close to \$10 an hour, and this is just like the earlier side of the program. So we haven't even seen what happens when individuals who have gone through (inaudible 1:52:54). We definitely are excited to see what that program holds, and some of the results. I'd say that's where we're trying to address the fact that we don't want our participants stuck at an \$8 or \$9 an hour wage.

ANGIE: Are there any felony types that individuals do not need to confess to the employers when they're applying for jobs?

BISHARA: Can you repeat that question again? [1:53:18]

ANGIE: Are there any types of felonies that someone would not have to put down on an application?

BISHARA: I guess I would say that's not exactly how we work with our participants in answering the question, around what type of conviction. So when we are coaching our participants, we say at our mock interview forum, as an employer, "We're going to do background checks on all of our employees. Have you ever been convicted of a felony or a misdemeanor?" And then we coach them on how to respond to that. Different job applications look different, so some might say they only do background checks for seven years, or they might do background checks into five years, and they may only ask about a felony.

But that's not our coaching. We're coaching around, how you address a criminal background in general, because an employer is going to see it, even if they don't ask for it, because they're going to end up doing a background check, particularly if our participant makes it into, kind of, like, the final hiring round.

ANGIE: Okay. Let's see. Do you guys work with sex offenders at all?

BISHARA: Yes we do. I've done mock interviews with many sex offenders, actually. Again, we do not screen for a conviction, we serve everyone. Our coaching varies depending on the type of conviction, which is why we want to see that, and we do try and manage expectations that certain convictions might take a little bit longer to place in jobs. But we serve everyone, and we do have success. [1:54:53]

ANGIE: I'm sorry. Is there a cutoff limit on the amount of time since someone had been released that they can come in Towards Employment and seek assistance from you guys?

BISHARA: Not at all. I've seen everything. We have individuals who are recently released, and I've seen individuals who have convictions that are 20-25 years old. We serve everyone. The only requirement in being in our program is that you've had some involvement with the Justice System.

ANGIE: There are several questions, I'm not going to be able to get through all of them.

BISHARA: I would also be happy to, if someone were to send me those questions off line, I can definitely try and answer some of them via e-mail.

SARAH: All right. We can do that for you Bishara, and, also, we'll e-mail out contact information for you after the webinar. We're going to move on to Tom Hutter, who is from our Office of Workforce Development and, just a second. [1:56:04]

[1:56:31]

TOM: Hello, everyone. Thank you for sitting through the first hour and a half, and I guess I understand from most of the questions and everything, a lot of you guys are interested in the House Bill and some other items. So, I'll go through the first part of this fairly quickly. I just want to bring up a few, I think, interesting and important points. I don't know how many of you heard that little stat – that one in six Ohioans have a criminal record. That's a pretty big number when you think about it, so that just shows you the need that we have for doing the type of work you're doing out there working with ex-offenders.

Another stat that just, kind of, jumps out, also, is currently there is anywhere from high 40,000 to about 50,000 current individuals incarcerated at the state institutions, and every year about 19,000 to 20,000 turn over. Every single year, we're looking at about 20,000 individuals, ex-offenders that are entering into our workforce. It is a big job out there, and those are pretty big numbers.

I think it's important to understand what they're doing at the state level, especially with ODRC, the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. They're doing a major kind of refocus on how they're managing their prison, and here's our Mission and Vision Statement. I don't think I need to read it to you. But what they're doing is they're putting a very high focus on reintegration and their thoughts on reintegration are pretty much what you're hearing today from everybody about the involvement of communities, faith-based organizations, and a number of resources all together to make this work. What they are doing with their institutions is, they're doing a three-tier unit management prison system.

The three types of tiers, right there, are, there are: control, general population, and reintegration centers. It's an approach that they hope that the offenders you know try to get into the reintegration centers for the services that they're going to be able to provide. They hope to earn their way into that. What they're trying to do is, right there, weed out disruptive inmates, and then showing that, through this three tier system, that they can work their way to being productive citizens. [1:59:15]

One of the things that we're doing, and we're focusing, the reason why I want to let you know that three tier approach is happening, is we are working very closely with that third tier, the reintegration centers. We call it the One-Stop offender network for One-Stop recidivism, and what we're doing is, we're basically putting on a One-Stop right in the institutions and that will be – the number, kind of, fluctuates as they're going through this. But right now, we're looking at about eight sites within the prison system that we're actually putting these in. They are pre-release services, and they're trying to replicate exactly what you guys are doing in One-Stops on the outside. We're trying to get a leg up on them and having them do it on the inside.

I think you all know what you do at your One-Stop system, so I don't really have to go through this, but it's the same approach. What we encourage at our One-Stops in the prisons is, we do encourage that community approach. We encourage programs that are out there, that are already doing the work with the ex-offenders, to maybe get a leg up, and jump ahead, and actually start working with some of the current offenders that are incarcerated now. We really encourage the current programs. What we're looking for is that smooth transition from pre-release to post-release, potentially working with the same individuals. [2:00:36]

We offer all the different types of services that we would in a One-Stop with a resource room, the labor market information. We do have a – we call it a live version of OhioMeansJobs – it's called the Ohio Reentry Connections. Although I'm sure you know what the security is, not truly live, but it is updated daily. That's one of the big things that really gives the pre-released individuals an idea of what the job market is like where they're going back. They can actually look at the live online job orders and see if there is the type of work they're looking for available in the areas that they're going to be returning to. A majority of them do return to the urban centers – Cleveland, definitely, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, Akron.

So, a lot of you are familiar with this screen. This is the ODRC version of the same screen, and it has the same functionality as Ohio Means Jobs. So when an individual actually signs up for

OhioMeansJobs while they're in the institution, it is a secure network and, on their release date, they actually do get released into the full blown OhioMeansJobs data base. We have seen some individuals get some immediate hits based on their resume and their work's history, the day they are released, once their information switches over.

What we're doing is, we're preparing these guys for everything that they're going to see when they get out, the way they need to apply for jobs when they get out, and the focus is really getting them ready to start work immediately upon release. We have the OhioMeansJobs – is available not only at our One-Stop reintegration centers, but also in the DRC libraries. Virtually, just about any inmate, at any time, can get access to this and see what's going on as far as jobs in their areas. [2:02:47]

Other tools that we use, some of you may be familiar with a lot of these. The M.U.S.C.L.E. Guide, obviously we have the Resume Builder, Keyboarding, and Word Processing. We put some labor marketing information on there, we use the OCIS, and, kind of, following up a little bit with what Alvis House does. We're encouraging them to look at jobs that are going to get them into careers. We want them thinking that they know they're not going to walk right into a management job pretty much right out of prison. But we want them to understand that, yeah, if you start here, you're going to make this kind of money. But if you do this, this, and that, you'll be able to continue to work your way of your career pathway. Obviously, we have Ohio Benefits Banks and other programs that are going to benefit the incarcerated individuals.

The approach that we use, we call it One Year to Get Ready, kind of a play on the whole one theme. We actually don't really go so far back as a year, because there are so many that are being released, that we generally are looking just three months to six months back. What we do with that is, we put – this is a big, huge poster/banner – that we actually put it up at all of the One-Stop sites. We do that as encouragement as to, “Okay guys, here's all the things that you need to be thinking about, looking at, figuring out what you're going to do. And you need to do all of this before your release so that when you're released, you don't have to worry about all of this kind of stuff to do, and you can concentrate on either going on job interviews or just a job search concentration.”

So we, kind of, lay it out, and what we do is, we do a monthly calendar that rotates. It's the same monthly calendar, so, like, let's just say somebody comes and they're doing mock interviewing, one of our providers, and they do it on the third Wednesday of every month. That way, if I'm an inmate, I can plan on, okay, there's a few things I need to get done sooner. I'll deal with those and I'll know that in three months I can do mock interviewing. I can check into public assistance, I can talk with APA about what I need to know for probation and parole. But they can, kind of, plan out how they're going to get through all these different items. [2:04:55]

We give them a booklet, since they're not allowed to have electronic devices. We give them a passport size booklet and actually track their own progress. We encourage that, we're actually there to help them, but we're not there to carry them all the way through. We expect them to use the booklet, we expect them to track their progress, and it's their employment plan that they're creating and that we're assisting them with it.

Serving Ex-Offenders

Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

I would be remiss not to acknowledge our Trumbull One-Stop up near 18, up in Warren, Ohio. They volunteered to work with our very first pilot site, and that began operations in February, 2012. So they've been in operation now about a year. We got to work through a lot of the issues of how to work with the inmates, a lot of processes and procedures and that enabled us to open up a second site in Pickaway in September. And, actually I am missing – actually, as I said, this is like a moving target.

These are the sites that were selected, and we're also going to add NEPRC to – the North East Pre-Release Center up in Cleveland – as a One-Stop site also. So, you can see there's going to be quite a few sites that we're going to be working with. A number of these are going to be opening over the next few months. That's, kind of, the progress we're at with our One-Stop program. [2:06:22]

I just wanted to give you an idea of what they look like. We encourage each site to create a site that is professional looking, and that is positive. We actually had the inmates paint this mural, this is a really large mural on those walls that are about fifteen feet high, and it shows an inmate from when they first enter into the institution all the way through to when – you can't really see it, but at the back corner there – they're actually at a job with a desk, with a suit and tie on. It's, kind of, encouraging them to progress through. There is the big banner; that's our bank of computers and every one of the sites, we usually have a computer lab. Then, bank of computers that we call "live," where they look at the OhioMeansJobs site information and a lot of the other programs.

These are the career pathways. We have about a dozen different posters with different careers. Up in Toledo, you may recognize these. I begged, borrowed, and stole from all of the One-Stops over the years, on your best practices. So this actually gives them a good idea about career ladders, where they can start, what they can expect to make, and give them an idea about some different types of careers. That's the monthly calendar. We post it on the wall. The first week, second week, third week, fourth week, and we rotate those out. Then they sign up for their classes and they get passes for them. [2:07:48]

We are part of the Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition Strategic Plan. I'm going to talk a little bit later here about the CIVICC database, which I think is going to be a great tool. For those of you not familiar with it, we are getting this evaluated by Cleveland State University. We're trying to collect as much data as we can, and hoping to get some practices working. Then, there are the impacts of the current and future legislation, and I'm going to go over some of that right now.

Okay good, good. We have plenty of time. I did send out, or I think Angie, or, okay. Sarah did. There's a fax sheet about Senate Bill 337 and House Bill 86. I'm going to try to break it down for you. I'll get into more detail as we have time, but basically, when you look at the – let me look at my notes here. The House Bill 86, the one that was done back in 2011, I always, kind of, think of this as pre-release type of activities. Then, when 337 became law just a few months back, that, kind of, deals with some kind of post-release type of activities and what we called collateral sanctions. [2:09:12]

With House Bill 86, for those incarcerated after September, 2011, they did expand earned credit days. That helps to reduce their sentences. That's a very talked about topic, along with the next topic, the Judicial Release, working with the individuals who are incarcerated now. It really gives them a lot of incentive to get out a little bit earlier. The Judicial Release does consider a reduction in sentence when you hit 80 percent of your sentence. Although the sentence has to be longer than a year, it doesn't exclude certain offenses. Some sexually oriented in nature offenses are excluded from that. The bill also looks at how some certain offenses are being – How do I want to say it? – How they're being – the penalties – oh, okay.

You know, some of the drug penalties, they actually raised some of the penalties to certain levels, and then, for some others, they lowered them. They're looking at different ways of how to sentence those offenses. The treatment, in lieu of conviction, is a big piece, and also the child support types of convictions are. Both bills, kind of, deal with some of the same things, and so they're, kind of, the same, but different. I'm going to try to get into the differences on those.

Both of them also have a certificate. In this particular bill, it's a Certificate of Achievement and Employability. What this does for an individual is this, is – they try to achieve, prior to release, and some of it may bleed over after their release, but what they try to do is, they're trying to show evidence that they've gone through rehabilitation activities. And that's what the certificates states for them, that, look, I'm an individual; yes, I've been incarcerated, I've done a crime, but this is what I've done with my time in there.

Part of that Certificate of Achievement and Employability, they have to do 120 hours of community service, and then they do some cognitive, behavioral, and vocational type activities throughout that, and then they actually engage in that particular certificate. What that certificate does is, it provides employers immunity from negligence in hiring ex-offenders, and it gives the ex-offenders something more to show that they are a viable candidate for employment. A big positive for them. [2:11:59]

The Senate Bill 337, which was passed just this past September, like I said, has to do more with (inaudible 2:12:07) released types of things. What we have found out, obviously, over the years, is that there are a lot of different collateral sanctions that really affect the hiring of an ex-offender. I'm going to talk about the CIVICC Database, and you would be amazed at the number of collateral sanctions that are out there for all kinds of offense.

So, to, kind of, mitigate some of that, this does allow for expungement of criminal records. Specifically, it will allow for a felony and a misdemeanor, if they were committed at different times, to be expunged – or would allow for two misdemeanors, as long as they are not the same offense, to be expunged. So, it does give a restored citizen the ability to clean up their record to some degree, and get some of these convictions sealed. [2:13:05]

Child Support. That issue came up in both bills, and one of the things is the severity of the being sentenced for non-payment of child support. When you really think about it, it, kind of, defeats the whole purpose of child support if you're putting somebody in prison, and they don't have the

Serving Ex-Offenders

Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

ability to pay. They look at different things. House Bill 86 looks at doing other treatment in lieu of conviction, maybe doing community service type activities, or doing community corrections, where they're able to get out and work. So they're looking at alternatives. Then 337 actually looks at sealing their convictions if they are current in their payments. It also (????) ability to work with support orders while an individual is incarcerated.

Then the other big thing with the child support is that a lot of the individuals lost their driving privileges, which, again, it does defeat the purpose if we're trying to get them to pay child support and support their family. They do need the ability to have transportation, so that does allow for other driving privileges. The other certificate in this bill is called the Certificate of Qualification for Employment, they usually call it CQE. What this does, if you're looking to get a license and a certain occupation that you may have done before you're incarcerated, then your felony conviction precludes you from getting that license. And that's one of your best ways of being able to make a living.

This is, kind of, aimed at individuals who have been out for a little bit now, and they've been living in a community. What it does is, it gives the ability for the restored citizen to apply in court for this particular certificate to lift the bar. And it says on there a type of sanction – and it has pretty specific – I'm trying to think of one off the top of my head. Maybe, it might be a financial institution, they were working in banking all their life, maybe as a financial planner and maybe they got a collateral sanction that they couldn't work in a banking institution and that's their best bet of getting a job. They can actually apply if they can show that they've, basically been living clean.

They can petition the court to get this certificate, and then they can go to that licensing or sanctioning board and show them that certificate and ask them to consider their particular case. It doesn't give them a blanket free pass to say "Yes, that sanction is lifted." It gives the Sanction Board or the Licensing Board the ability to actually take that into consideration and possibly reinstate a license. [2:16:16]

So that's a pretty big piece, right there, to help individuals after they've been incarcerated, because that has been a huge barrier for many of them, to not be able to get back into the type of work that they were doing before. That's fairly new. That actually was slated to become available this month. I wish I could tell you a little bit more about how it's working. If folks are getting them, but, actually, I think it's probably just, kind of, a new thing that's actually working right now, and I don't really have too much information on how that's going.

On the previous slide will be expungement and the sealing of records. I have heard from a number of individuals who have gone back. It does take a few months to be able to get through, especially if you're in an urban area, to get through the course. But it has been working, and their records have been sealed, and background checks are not showing those actual convictions, that they're getting sealed. That is working, and I've heard that now, right from individuals who have done that. That's good news there.

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

The other thing that I wanted to get to before we end is, I don't know how many of you are familiar with this particular database, called the CIVICC Database. It's been years in the making. And years and years ago, when we first started doing the One-Stops, I remember folks saying that there's this list that everybody passes around that lists all of the collateral sanctions. So that, if you're working with ex-offenders, you'll know what kind of jobs not to put them in, and to work with it. We never were able to find that list anywhere. But we have a much better system here now.

There is a website for the CIVICC Database. And what this does is, they put all the different types of convictions that are out there – and this is for Ohio – and then they cross-reference it against all the different types of collateral sanctions that may happen. I actually did a longer version, but it's really hard to see on this. I just did the front page. But what you can do with this database – and it's really user friendly, very easy to use – is you can go in, you can either search by the offense, you can do it by name, you can put, like, arson in there, or you can do it by the actual offense code. And when you actually enter it in there it will bring up all the different types of impacts for that particular crime. It will tell you if it's, like, an employment impact, whether it's civic type of impact, whether it's a political type of impact – like you might not be able to sit on a certain type of Board. So, it goes all through the different types of, what we call, collateral sanctions. You can also go in it and you can actually search by a key word. [2:19:24]

For instance, just to use the example about somebody was working in a financial institution, you can type in financial institution and it will cross-reference all the different offenses that would impact any work in a financial institution. It's actually a pretty incredible database, even if it did take a number of years to get going. I know the first version was a little bit difficult to work with, but they've really vastly improved it. And so, I highly recommend that anybody working with ex-offenders to get on-site, to play around in this site, and you'd just be amazed at the type of information and just how much you would be able to help the ex-offender you're working with.

We actually encourage them, pre-release in their One-Stops, just is, the first thing that we tell them to check is what type of work are you going to go into. Let's check it, now, to make sure that there aren't sanctions against it, and if they're severe enough, you're going to have to start thinking about maybe a different type of career or a different approach. We think that this particular site is important enough that we stress it as the very first item for them to look at.

I, kind of, went through everything really fast because I knew we were running out of time. I probably didn't get into the details some of you wanted, but we've got, what, about five minutes? I'll take any questions. Hopefully I didn't go through it too fast for you.

SARAH: First of all, the booklet that you mentioned, is that available online for everyone to go to? The booklet that the inmates receive?

TOM: No, that's actually something that we just give them while they're incarcerated. That's what they use to follow. Now, I will say that, if you see them come out with that booklet, you'll know that they've gone through the One-Stop prior to that. We encourage them to take their

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

booklet with them, because we tell them to write down any job leads, write down any reference information, things like that. We expect them to keep following up with their employment plan. [2:21:15]

SARAH: As far as expungements go, is there any available funds available to help with the expense of that?

TOM: Not that I'm aware of (inaudible 2:21:28).

SARAH: So, any local programs, or anything at this point, that you know about?

TOM: There could be, I'm just not aware of any.

SARAH: Okay. The cost is normally \$50. Yeah, that's what we've been told.

TOM: Yeah, it's pretty nominal. Most of you should have received a Workforce Alert that we sent out mid-January, that has a guide about doing the expungement.

SARAH: Right. There's actually a process to it. Are they going to help with that in the One-Stops, or do you know of those?

TOM: Well, that's why we have webinars like this to encourage –

SARAH: Everyone. Outreach.

TOM: Um-huh.

SARAH: Okay. The Certification of Qualifications does that require a lawyer?

TOM: It's fairly new, and I believe so. The information that I have is that they apply to the Court. So I'm not sure quite, in-depth, how that goes. Again, it's a fairly new process, I don't know too much about it yet. I just wanted to let people know that it's out there. It was supposed to kick in this month. [2:22:35]

SARAH: Do you know if the Senate Bill 337, if that was sent out to everyone, so that they could read it for background information?

TOM: I know that a brief summary was sent out along with that back in mid-January.

SARAH: Okay.

Man: There is a link on the DRC website to that (inaudible 2:22:59).

SARAH: Legal advice, I guess you would have to go to a lawyer to get help with the expungement. I have a lot of questions about that.

Serving Ex-Offenders
Bishara Addison, Randy Baker, Al Young, Tom Hutter

TOM: I know that the individuals that I talked to about the expungement, they did it themselves. They didn't need an attorney, it's fairly simple paperwork.

SARAH: Yeah, there are actual forms that were included in that packet that was sent out to everyone.

TOM: Correct.

SARAH: Are there any certain convictions that would not qualify for an expungement that you can think of?

TOM: Yes, I believe the sexual oriented offense. I'm looking at my notes to see if there is others. I don't believe they allow murder.

RANDY: I can actually get those to you.

TOM: Okay.

RANDY: First and second degree felonies are not, a crime against a minor is not, or any crime where mandatory prison time is part of the offense, and the sexually oriented falls into this other category. But, if it's a first or second degree felony, if that's against a minor, anything that mandatory prison time is part of this (inaudible 2:24:20).

SARAH: I think that just about covers, a lot of the other things are just pretty much more in details and stuff. So I think we're going to try to develop a Q&A to send out to the people that have attended. Because there are a lot of questions, and I know that Bishara said that she would be willing to answer some of those questions, too.

Maybe we can work on getting that developed next week and get that sent out to everyone, because there's a lot of questions on – they want to know who the presenters are and everything, too. So we definitely want to get that contact information to everyone, so that it is available. But at this point, I think that we have about two minutes left.

TOM: I think that, maybe wrapping up, I think Ohio's pretty much a leader in this whole reintegration approach. The things that they're doing, a lot of states are looking at and the tools that we have here are really pretty, quite impressive, especially with this whole legislation that's been passed with the CIVICC Database. You're probably working in one of the best states right now for working with ex-offenders and reintegration. It's good to know. [2:25:25]

SARAH: Thank you Tom. Thanks to all of our speakers and we'll be sending out contact information and also the answers to our Q&A, or we'll send those questions to whatever speaker you had wanted to ask that question. I guess that's it. Thank you.