

ALAMEDA COUNTY RE-ENTRY JOBS PROGRAM

October 11, 2016

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INTRODUCTION

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- Scope of the issue
 - National challenge for individuals reentering the work force after incarceration.
 - According to a 2010 report from the Center for Policy and Economic Research, a felony conviction or a prison or jail term can have a substantial negative impact on future job prospects. In many states, a felony conviction also carries significant legal restrictions on subsequent employment, including limitations on government employment and professional licensing.
 - Addressing this on a national level, in April 2016 President Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum establishing the Federal Interagency Reentry Council to lead the Government's work on the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals returning to their communities from prisons and jails and the White House hosted 19 major companies to launch the Fair Chance Business Pledge to provide job opportunities for those individuals.

ALAMEDA COUNTY ROLE

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- To generally support job opportunities for individuals who were formerly incarcerated or have felony convictions which prevent them from obtaining employment.
 - Existing commitment by the County of Alameda to provide access to job opportunities.
 - Potential job opportunities within the County of Alameda as an employer.
 - Other opportunities to support job creation for formerly incarcerated individuals and those with felony convictions.

EXISTING AVENUES PROVIDED BY THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA FOR JOB OPPORTUNITIES WITH EMPLOYERS THROUGHOUT ALAMEDA COUNTY

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- Sheriff's Office
 - Annual Re-Entry Expo and Job Fair at Santa Rita Jail to provide inmates with information about employment and paid job training opportunities available upon release from custody.
 - Inmates scheduled for release within 30 days of the events have the option of being interviewed for current job openings.
 - Inmates start application process for paid job training opportunities.
 - Alameda County as one of several employers participating
- Education and Training programs offered during incarceration.
 - HiSET Testing, Adult Secondary Education, and Food Service Programs
 - Computer Skills Class
 - Employability Career Development Course
 - American Job Center of California (L.E.A.P. grant funded)

EXISTING AVENUES PROVIDED BY THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA FOR JOB OPPORTUNITIES WITH EMPLOYERS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

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Social Services Agency

- The “Beyond the Gates” Project: A Partnership between Workforce Development Board and the Sheriff’s Office to provide career counseling services, training and support services to targeted inmates mitigating their time of unemployment and assisting in successful re-entry to Alameda County communities. Federal grant dollars provide funding to establish an America Job Center within the Santa Rita Jail.

EXISTING AVENUES PROVIDED BY THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA FOR JOB OPPORTUNITIES WITH EMPLOYERS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

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- Probation Department
 - Using AB 109 realignment monies, the County contracts with a Community-Based Organization to help assist the realigned population with preparation, training and attainment of employment. Services provided include:
 - Employability Assessments.
 - Job Readiness Training.
 - Transitional Work Programs.
 - Subsidized/Unsubsidized Employment.
 - Job Retention Services.

EXISTING AVENUES PROVIDED BY THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA FOR JOB OPPORTUNITIES WITH EMPLOYERS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

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- Probation Department - (continued) - Contracts with Community-Based Organizations that hire the formerly incarcerated
 - ❖ Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS), Oct. 2016 thru Oct. 2018 - \$3M:
 - 800 clients referred for employment services
 - 450 to complete program and be employable
 - ❖ For Us by Us, Dec. 2016 thru Dec. 2018 - \$1M:
 - Estimated 75% of current employees will be formerly incarcerated (details TBD)
 - ❖ Five Keys Charter School (Education Services), Oct. 2016 thru Oct. 2018 - \$1M:
 - 4 formerly incarcerated will be hired as staff (25%)
 - ❖ BHCS Innovations, Workforce Development For Peer Services, July 1, 2016 thru Dec. 31, 2017 - \$700K:
 - 23 staff are paid from Innovations funds and are formerly incarcerated

CURRENT EFFORTS BY THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA TO PREPARE FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS FOR JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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- Office of the Public Defender
 - In conjunction with East Bay Community Law Center, the Clean Slate project helps individuals involved with the criminal justice system remove barriers to employment through a variety of options:
 - Reduce felonies to misdemeanors for qualifying offenses
 - Early termination of felony or misdemeanor probation
 - Dismissal of case when probation is completed
 - Dismissal of infraction cases
 - Dismissal of local prison cases
 - Certificates of Rehabilitation for state prison and PC 290 cases
 - Sealing arrest records when factually innocent

DIRECT JOB OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

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- Human Resource Services - Ban-the-box program
 - Objective: Provide qualified individuals with criminal histories an opportunity to compete for Alameda County employment.
 - History:
 - State law prohibits an employer from requesting criminal background information on the initial employment application for local and state government employees.
 - Alameda County instituted a program in 2008 to limit inquiries about criminal convictions at the application stage.
 - Current program structure:
 - After completing the final step in the examination process candidates fill out a Criminal History Form (CHF) asking about criminal convictions.
 - HRS evaluates reported convictions for a nexus to employment. If the conviction is disqualifying for the particular job opening, the candidate is not considered any further for that opening. Otherwise, the candidate is then placed on the eligible list for employment.
 - After selection from the eligible list, a conditional offer of employment is made and the candidate is fingerprinted. If the resulting DOJ report reflects a conviction, HRS and the Department will consider whether the conviction is disqualifying, and whether the candidate was untruthful on the CHF. If disqualifying, the conditional offer of employment is revoked. If not, the candidate will be appointed to the position and begin work.

BAN-THE-BOX STATISTICS

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Category	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	Total
Applications received	28,988	34,057	39,597	28,407	22,808	24,343	22,781	25,815	226,796
Candidates who submitted CHF	3,322	3,342	3,239	2,561	2,802	3,475	3,813	2,718	25,272
Candidates who marked "Yes" on CHF	262	271	234	255	149	248	274	165	1,858
Candidates blocked from eligible list based on CHF	10	2	2	2	1	3	9	not available	29
Candidates with convictions (per DOJ reports)	82	91	101	53	54	81	47	112	621
Candidates with convictions who were hired	78	86	91	48	47	71	44	106	571
Percentage of candidates who were hired after they were found to have convictions	95%	95%	90%	91%	87%	88%	94%	95%	92%
Candidates found ineligible for a specific job based on either CHF or DOJ results	14	7	12	7	8	13	12	6 (DOJ only)	79
New hires with convictions who received tenure	16	43	39	11	21	15	18	71	234
Percentage of new hires with convictions who were eligible for and received tenure	84%	90%	89%	73%	91%	88%	78%	92%	88%

BAN-THE-BOX STATISTICS

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- From 2008 through 2015 Alameda County hired 571 individuals with criminal conviction histories in a wide range of job classifications including:
 - Clerical - all levels from entry through supervisory
 - Professional appraisal, engineering, accounting, executive, information technology, human resources, medical and health care, social services, planning and public protection
 - Management positions in virtually every department
 - Skilled building, construction and maintenance
 - Entry level positions such as custodial, crossing guard and library workers

PROPOSED BAN-THE-BOX ENHANCEMENTS

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- Eliminate the CHF
 - Large majority of candidates do not have convictions to report.
 - CHF can present an unnecessary obstacle to candidates with convictions that would not be disqualifying.
 - Information disclosed on CHF is sometimes erroneous and irrelevant.
 - All convictions are captured through fingerprinting before employment.
 - May improve overall goal of removing barriers to employment of those with criminal convictions.
- Reevaluate and refine list of jobs where specific convictions would be disqualifying.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT WITH ALAMEDA COUNTY

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- Temporary Assignment Pool
 - More flexibility about qualifications, experience and testing process.
 - Limited to 18 months per assignment.
 - Opportunity to learn skills and gain experience.
- Social Services Agency - CalWORKS Public Service Trainee Program
 - CalWORKS job seekers are placed in temporary paid clerical positions throughout SSA and various County departments.
 - This program is not focused on formerly incarcerated individuals, but may include some who are also CalWorks recipients.
 - It can serve as a model for a paid transition jobs program using classroom skill building and on-the-job training to prepare CalWORKS participants for careers in the public and private sectors.

DIRECT JOB OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

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Creating a pathway into entry-level Civil Service jobs with the County for individuals who are not well equipped to compete for jobs through the County's Civil Service system because of former incarceration or felony conviction.

- Lack of job readiness and life skills.
- Lack of job skills and/or job experience required by entry level County employment.

CHALLENGES

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- County Charter and Civil Service Rules require a competitive testing process for permanent County jobs.
- Formerly incarcerated individuals are often not readily able to compete for County jobs.
- Objections to special treatment of this population by organized labor and other competitors for entry level positions.
- Employing departments may find it difficult to provide the level of support and supervision required for this population.

IDENTIFYING ENTRY LEVEL JOB CLASSIFICATIONS

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- HRS has identified roughly 50 entry level job classifications that might be able to be filled by individuals who were formerly incarcerated or who have felony convictions.
 - “Entry level” positions require no more than two years of experience.
 - No education requirement beyond high school.
- Most vacancies occur in the following classifications:
 - Eligibility Support Clerk
 - Clerk II
 - Library Clerk II
 - Library Page
 - Laborer
 - Janitor
- County fills roughly 200-250 vacancies in all the entry level classifications annually.

IDENTIFYING CANDIDATES

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- Need a process that provides the County with candidates who were formerly incarcerated, or have felony convictions, and who are prepared to be successful.
 - Motivated
 - Job ready
 - Trained in basic job skills needed for available County jobs
- Initial approach would use existing CBO contracts with the Probation Department to supply the candidates because:
 - Existing programs and contracts are already in place
 - Providers have a list of job placements locations, and could add the County as one more
 - CBOs already provide case management services and could do so for the County as one more employer
- Additional providers of job ready trained candidates could be added once we determine capacity, placement and best practices.

MANAGING THE COMPETITIVE TESTING PROCESS

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- Create a new job classification “Program Worker.”
- Minimum qualifications are:
 - Status as a formerly incarcerated individual; and
 - Successful completion of Probation’s Reentry Employment Services program or similar program that provides job and life skills training sufficient to support employment with the County.
- Position will be permanently “Provisional.”
 - No testing required.
 - Not a permanent position.
 - Fully benefitted.
- Positions housed in HRS.
- Specific placement will be in departments.

DESIGNATING POSITIONS TO BE FILLED BY “PROGRAM WORKERS”

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- Upon requesting a recruitment or certification for any of the identified entry level job classifications, Departments would determine whether the vacancies could be filled by a member of this population.
- If so, the specified number of positions would be specialty designated. Specialty designation positions can only be filled by individuals who meet the criteria of the specialty designation. In this case, the specialty designation would be:
 - Individuals who were formerly incarcerated or who have felony convictions; and
 - Who have completed one of Probation’s Reentry Employment Programs or similar program that provides job and life skills training sufficient to support employment with the County.

FILLING THE POSITIONS

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- Departments would provisionally appoint the individual to the vacant specialty designated position, and pay the Worker the salary for that position.
- The Worker would then remain in the position for so long as it takes to develop the work skills to meet the other job-related minimum qualifications of the position (specific job skills, work experience).
- HRS and the Department would then administer a Civil Service test to fill the specialty designated position. Only candidates meeting the MQs for the position as well as the additional specialty designation criteria would be able to compete.
- The successful candidates would become permanent Civil Service employees.

SUPPORT FOR THE WORKER AND THE COUNTY EMPLOYER

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- Case Management approach, including:
 - Probation Officer
 - Departmental Personnel Officer where employee placed
 - Employee's supervisor
 - HRS
 - Probation CBO
- Regular meetings to address issues and provide support
- CBO available to employee and manager at all times

TRAINING

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- Provided for:
 - Department managers and supervisors of Worker.
 - Employees who work alongside Worker.
- Consisting of:
 - Myths and misconceptions about formerly incarcerated individuals.
 - Challenges faced by reentering workers.
 - Benefits of supporting reentry programs and workers.
 - Strategies for working with formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Provided by:
 - Probation's CBOs under existing or modified contracts.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES TO CREATE JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS AND THOSE WITH FELONY CONVICTIONS- PHASE 2

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- Provide incentives/requirements to County contractors to create job opportunities within their organizations for this population.
- Provide resources and encouragement to other public jurisdictions within Alameda County to hire formerly incarcerated individuals and those with felony convictions.
 - Promote Ban-the-Box project to other public jurisdictions within Alameda County.
 - Identify and support programs run by other public and private agencies.
- Build on existing programs in Probation, Social Services and Sheriff's departments to provide expanded training and job placement.
- Consider sheltered and/or subsidized employment projects outside County civil service and explore models already in existence.

NEXT STEPS

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- Board approval of Plan in concept.
- Implementation of Phase 1.
- Report back in early 2017 regarding progress and next steps.

QUESTIONS?

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