

Employment Strategy's for Ex-Offenders and those who suffer with Mental Illness

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Session Objectives

- To provide thought provoking conversation.
- Review current stats.
- To think about out of the box concepts.
- To create the beginnings of a framework.
- To identify possible collaborating partners.
- To have some Fun!!!

Data Review

- There are 5million people incarcerated in the USA
- 1.25Million of those incarcerated suffer from Mental Illness
- 600,000 Ex-Offenders are released each year
- 283,000 of those Ex-Offenders suffer from Mental Illness
- Mental Illness in the prison population is 5 times greater (56.2 %) than the general public (11%)
- 73% of women compared to 55% of men in prison suffer from mental illness

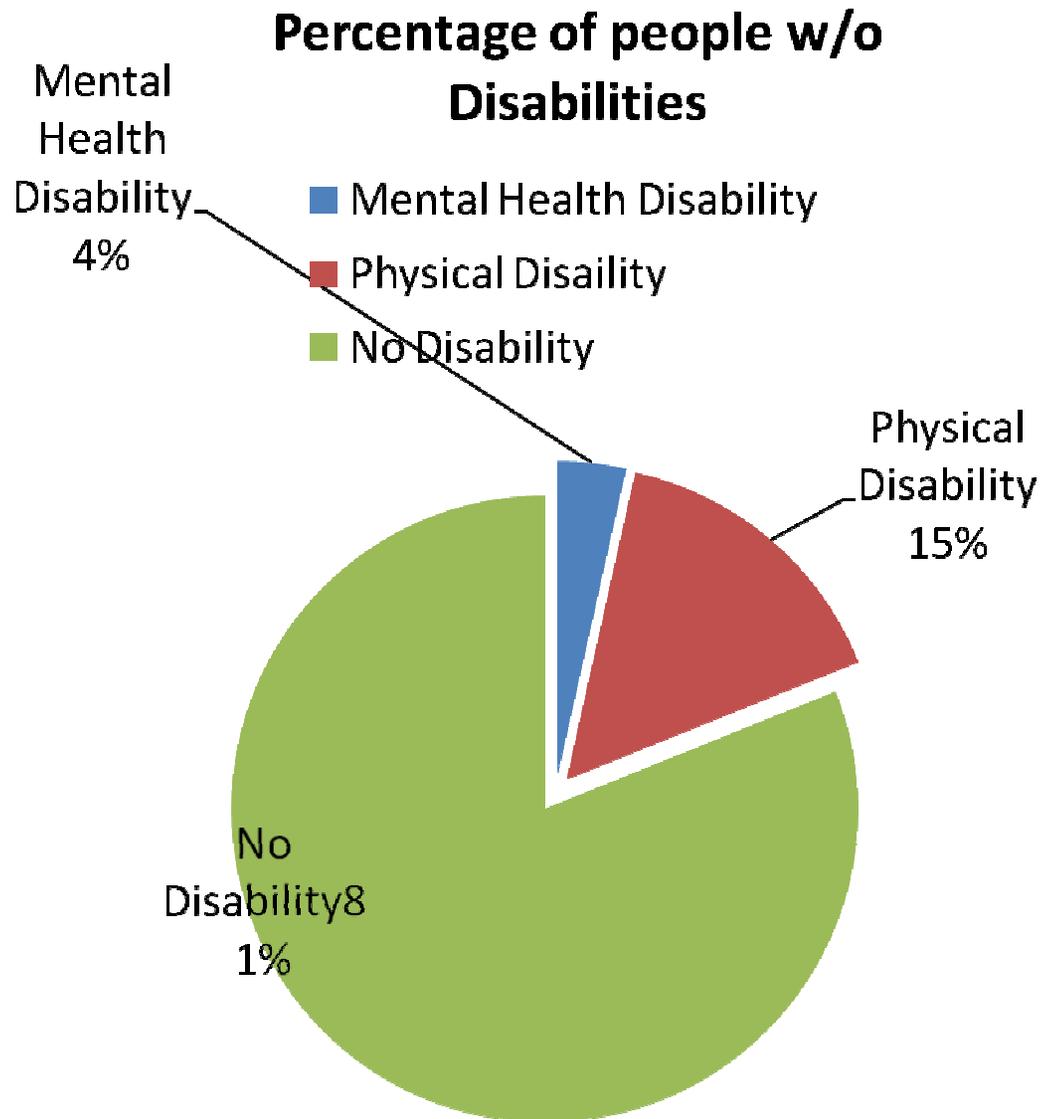
Data Review (cont)

- It's estimated that 42% of inmates have both mental health and substance abuse issues
- 20% of youth in the juvenile system have serious mental illness, while up to 75% have some mental illness (emotional or behavioral)
- Approximately 47% of ex-offenders reentering the workforce do not have a high school diploma
- Approximately 5 out of 102 employers(5%) stated they would consider hiring ex-offenders

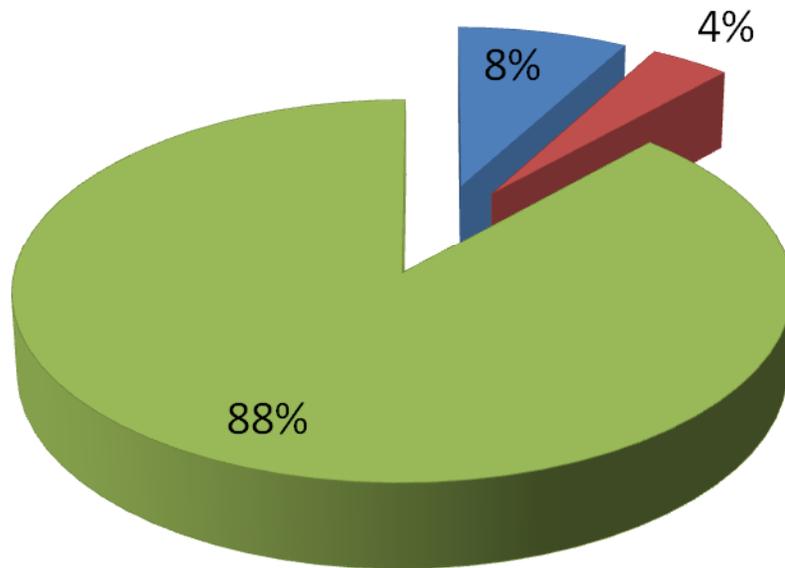
Mental Health & Disability

3.5% of the adult U.S. non-institutionalized population is estimated to have a mental health disability (6.7 million)

15.4% of the population is estimated to have a physical disability without a co-occurring mental health disability (29.3 million)

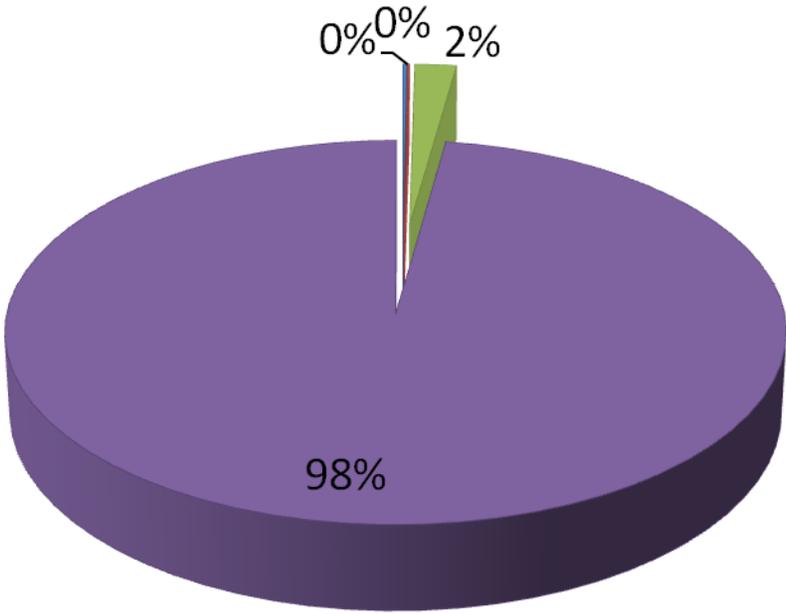


Targeted Employment Population



- Ex-offenders released from prison each year
- Ex-offenders released each year who suffer from Mental Illness
- General non-criminal population that suffer from Mental Illness

Employable U.S. Workforce



- Ex-offenders released from prison each year
- Ex-offenders released each year who suffer from Mental Illness
- General non-criminal population that suffer from Mental Illness
- Applicant pool of USA

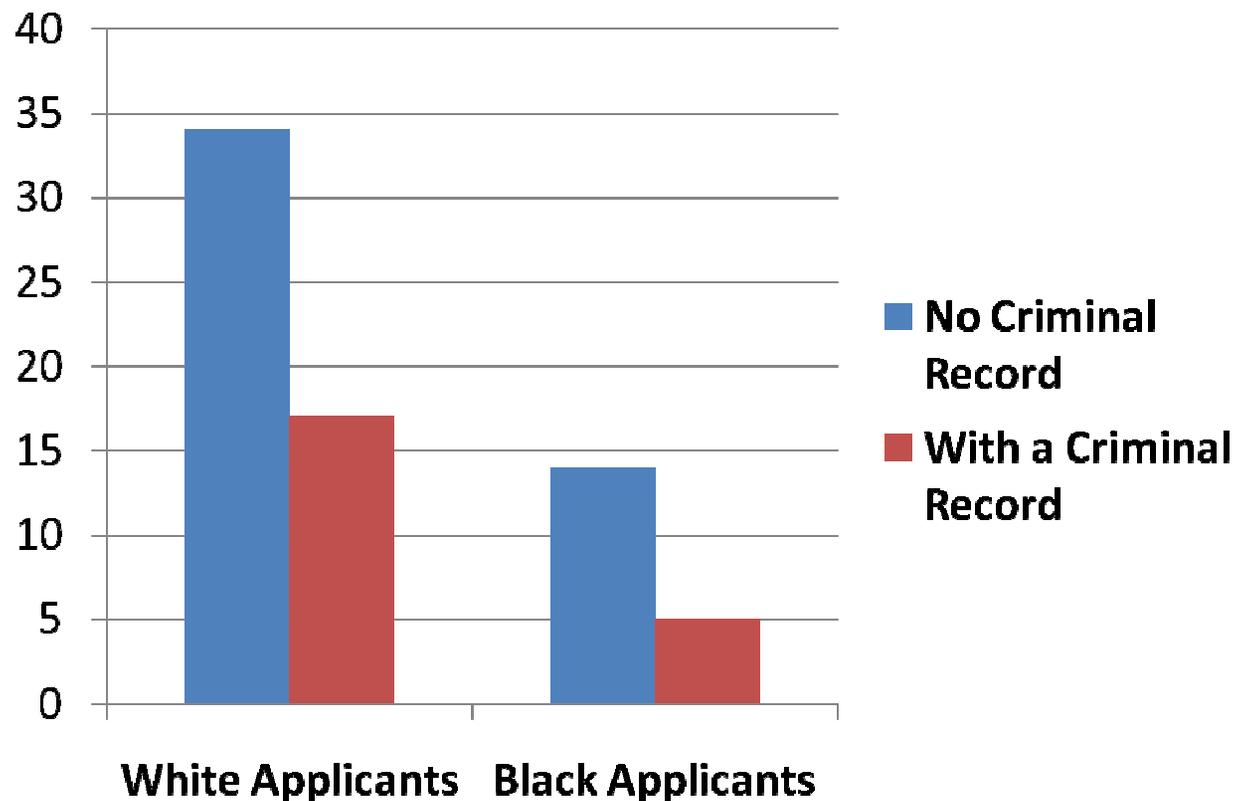
What are the current techniques used to
employ
these two groups?



Current Techniques

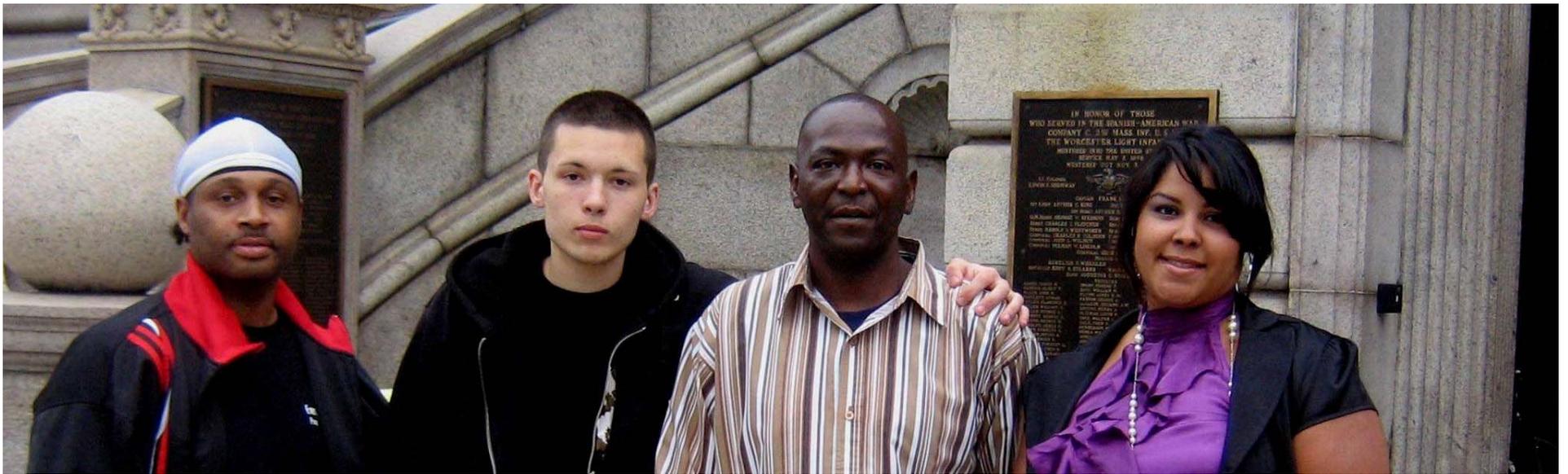
- Demonstrating the ability to meet and understand the employers needs
- Using brochure mailers
- Telephone contact with Hiring Managers
- In-Person contact with employers
- Conduct forums with industry leaders
- Client Education & Training
- Job readiness prep of clients

Employer call-back rates for applicants with, and without, a criminal record



Source: "Walking the Talk? What Employers Say Versus What They Do," Devah Pager (Princeton University) and Lincoln Quillian (Northwestern University), in the *American Sociological Review*, 2005, Vol. 70 (June: 355-380)

How do we create meaningful opportunities for those



who suffer from mental illness or are ex-offenders?

Do we *Really* understand the needs of the Ex-offender/ MHI population?

Catch Phrases

- Family reunification
- Self-esteem Building
- Housing
- Structure
- Focus/Direction
- Income Assistance
- Jobs
- Helping Hand

Translates to ...

- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?
- ?

Mental Health Consumers

- Usually does want to work 40 hours per week or 8 hour shifts.
- Shy away from highly interactive jobs.
- A Need for managers and co-workers to understand how MHI works.
- Works better when others with MHI are co-workers (support system)
- Needs flexible jobs(Schedule).
- Very concerned about losing benefits.
- Doesn't want to be treated special.

Educate Employers About Hiring Qualified People



Business owners like:



- Statistics
- Flashy presentations
- Firm but non-pushy sales reps
- Love to be held-*(make them feel special)*
- To feel like they are getting something for free
- To feel like they are “In the Know” before others
- To hear about Employer’s Return on Investment (ROI)

BAN THE BOX

Sealing of Convictions

- **Misdemeanor convictions** can be sealed after 5 years
- **Felony convictions** can be sealed after 10 years*
- The clock begins as soon as a person returns to the community (not the end of parole or probation)

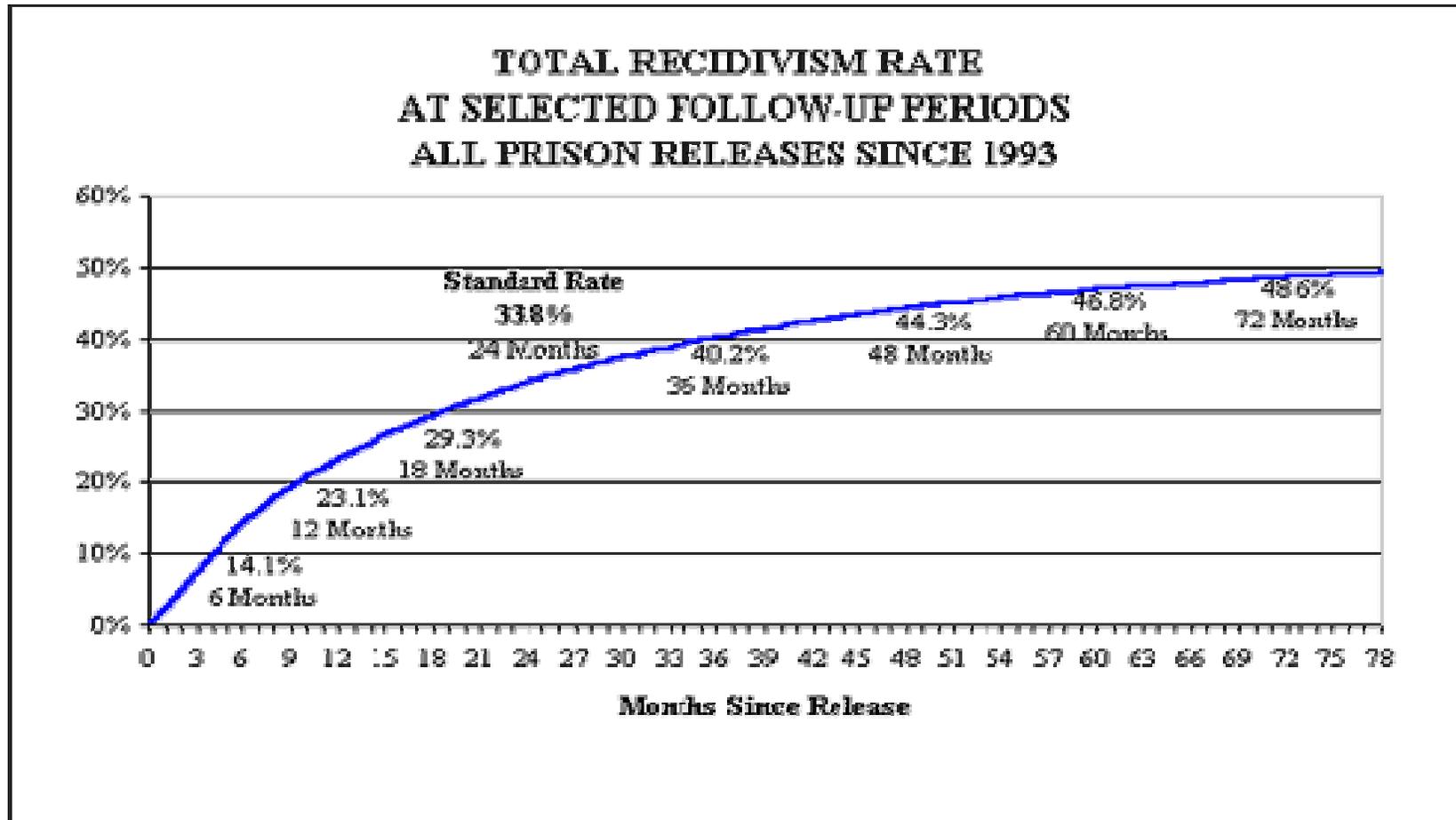
* Convictions for murder and most sex offenses cannot be sealed

Criminal Records Terms:

- **“Sealing”**: the protection of criminal record information from most public view, as defined by state law. (e.g. only criminal justice agencies and child care services have access to “sealed” records in Most States)
- **“Expungement”**: the complete removal of a criminal record from all state files.

Recidivism Rates Drop Sharply Over Time

A person who has remained crime-free for five years has less than a 5% chance of ever breaking the law again.



Source: Florida Department of Corrections:
<http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/recidivism/2001/curves.html>

Ban the Box

Major U.S. Cities and Counties that have passed local ordinances:

Austin, TX

Baltimore, MD

Berkeley, CA

Boston, MA

Bridgeport, CT

Cambridge, MA

Chicago, IL

Cincinnati, OH

Detroit, MI

Hartford, CT

Jacksonville, FL

Kalamazoo, MI

Memphis, TN

New Haven, CT

Norwich, CT

Multnomah County, OR

Oakland, CA

Providence, RI

San Francisco, CA

Seattle, WA

St Paul, MN

Travis County, TX

Worcester, MA

Other State Practices for Sealing / Expungement of Convictions

- Fourteen states have **statutory deferred adjudication** that leads to eventual expungement or sealing of the court record after successful completion of probation: Arkansas, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington. In many of these states, only non-violent first offenders are eligible for deferred adjudication. *
- Six states allow sealing or expungement of most offenses after some waiting period: Kansas, Minnesota, Nevada, Puerto Rico, Utah, and Washington. Many others have provisions only for misdemeanors or minor, non-violent offenses. **

**Courtesy of the National HIRE Network. www.hirenetwork.org

**Courtesy of the Sentencing Project. www.sentencingproject.org

Don't let your **sight** get in the
way of your **VISION**

CHANGE YOUR GAME!

Strategic Planning and Analysis

- Write out your agenda
- Write out competing agenda
- Write out major issues/policy battles related to problem(s)
- Write out Key names of decision-makers over the problem area (s)
- Write out and understand who the major opposition is
- Write out organized progressive groups (**core service agency**)
- Write out unorganized social sector groups
- Analyze the picture and develop strategies for changing the power base (***State legislature, City Council Members, Board of supervisors***)
- *This should provide you with a road map of who to contact, who to avoid and what issues are important to them!*

Relationships



Leadership should come from People Directly Affected by the Problem



Promising Practices in the Mental Health

Johns Hopkins

Mental Health Work/Study

Project

The Mental Health Work/Study project

- The Mental Health Work/Study project was created in an effort to enhanced career opportunities while at the same time having a positive impact on the high turnover rates that the industry experiences with entry level positions
- It is a two stage program, spanning two plus years, enrolling employees/students hired by participating providers in relevant community college courses while they are working at the entry level job

Designing An Enhanced Work Study Program **Leading to an AA Degree**

- Participating providers from the industry worked with an existing community college which offered an Associate's degree in Mental Health to create an integrated work-study program based on industry and provider needs

Designing An Enhanced Work Study Program

Leading to an AA Degree (Cont)

- An important initial process in the design phase of the pilot was conducted by the providers and the college staff in which the curriculum and actual on-the-job duties and tasks were articulated, linking the educational program and the job.
Employees/students not only obtain college credits for the skills they master while working, the providers who employ the students fully participate by providing feedback, and in many instances, release time for course participation.

Identification of Resources for the Program

- The providers, the college and the local workforce investment organizations explored various resources that were available for providing tuition assistance for the employee/students. The approximate annual cost of the program is \$50,000 for 15 employee/students
- Options such as Pell Grants, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) resources, employer contributions, Maryland Business Works and other resources are all potential avenues for support

Program Recruitment and Implementation:

- Once resources were identified and secured, the providers, with the appropriate assistance from the local workforce organization (the one-stop) and the college, recruited employee/students for the program, hired them if they were not already employed, and the program began.

System Collaboration

- We encouraged and facilitated collaboration among three systems -- the mental health providers (employers), the local workforce system (Directors) and the area community colleges –encouraging them to come together to customize a Pilot Mental Health Work-Study Program that would facilitate a career path for entry level workers in the providers workforce.

Thinking Points

- Build/Strengthen business relationships.
- Bridge the gap and increase communication.
- Network-get involved in local events.
- Get to know the power players.
- Collaborate with others with similar goals.
- Change your thinking.
- If it doesn't exist...Create it!
- Never be afraid to Ask for Help!

Contact info for EPOCA

Ex-Prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement

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