

From the Media to Practice

This is a series in which we highlight an issue raised by a recent press article.

Employer Partners: A Critical Component in the Reentry Equation

Glenn Martin

This year the National H.I.R.E. Network made a strategic decision to focus a considerable portion of its resources toward educating employer partners on the benefits associated with hiring people with criminal records, while working to break down the stigmatization and false notions that create the impetus for employers to ignore this population of jobseekers. As most of us are aware, encouraging the media to write a positive story about our constituency can be a daunting task, but we've encountered one article that not only effectively addresses the relevant issues, but has employers as its audience, who seldom have an opportunity to hear our perspective. Lucy Webb's

[continued on page 2](#)

A Transitional Approach to Apprenticeships and Employment Strategies: A Federal Systems Model

The Role of the Federal Bureau of Prisons

DonaLee Breazzano, Administrator
Inmate Skills Development Branch
Federal Bureau of Prisons

The National Workforce Development Partnership (a national level collaboration) was developed by staff representing the Department of Labor, Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Office of Probation and Pretrial Services (OPPS), Federal Bureau of Prisons (Bureau), National Institute of Corrections, and the Legal Action Center - National H.I.R.E. Network, to facilitate a transitional approach to apprenticeships and employment strategies for ex-offenders. The ultimate goal of the partnership is to enhance reentry success through increased opportunities for career-oriented employment of people with criminal records.

To address this goal at both the local and national level, the agency partners have identified several key components, which include:

- initiating collaboration between agencies impacting employment resources and skill development;
- developing partnerships with industries and employers;
- forecasting what occupations are, and will likely remain, in demand in geographic areas where inmates are releasing to;
- reviewing the Bureau's vocational training and apprenticeship programs to ensure they are consistent with current industry-wide accepted standards and projected workforce development needs;

[continued on page 2](#)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 From Media to Practice
- 1 A Transitional Approach to Apprenticeships and Employment Strategies: A Federal Systems Model
- 3 HIRE on the Hill
- 4 Funding Opportunities
- 5 Upcoming Conferences of Interest
- 7 Hot Off the Press
- 8 Friends of Island Academy: Youth, Employment and Reentry from Jail
- 9 Advocacy on the Legal Front

article, “Beyond Bars” (January 21, 2005) *Washington Business Journal*, begins by reminding the reader of the scope of the problem and proceeds to point out that people with criminal records, like everyone else, need gainful employment in order to care for their themselves and their families. It also encourages employers to shed their preconceived biases and take a new look at these jobseekers.

Webb highlights the correlation between a lack of gainful employment and public safety, writing “If someone does not put them on a payroll, we all pay for their welfare and continued crime.” Capturing the fundamental interest of most employers, she goes on to add that not only do we save money by not supporting the ballooning cost of recidivism, but “employers can actually benefit financially” by taking advantage of tax incentives, and free bonding for employees with criminal records.

Webb also offers sound advice to employers who hire people with criminal records by emphasizing some of the ways to avoid problems that may lead to decreased job retention. While public access to criminal records is the general rule in society, the author emphasizes the importance of employers sharing this information only on a need-to-know basis with other employees. She encourages the reader to think about how they would feel if their personal information was disseminated to their fellow colleagues indiscriminately.

Finally, Webb touches on the single issue that seems to be the determining factor that most discourages employers from hiring from our constituency: negligent hiring concerns. Quoting from our Legal Action Center pamphlet done for the U.S. Department of Labor, “From Hard Time to Full Time (2001),” Webb reminds employers that the “key to determining liability is usually whether the employer could have foreseen the crime: Specifically, whether the employee had a history or propensity for harmful behavior and, most importantly, whether the employer knew or should have known of the employee’s propensities.” The National H.I.R.E. Network continually reminds our employer partners that the chances of being sued for negligent hiring are mostly unsubstantiated and that reasonable efforts to check the background of perspective employees and consider applicants on a case-by-case basis will eliminate the risk of liability on the employer’s part.

To read the article in its entirety, please visit <http://washington.bizjournals.com/washington/stories/2005/01/24/smallb1.html?page=1>. ❖

- developing measurable and demonstrable criteria for the different levels of skills needed for industry occupations;
- conducting skills assessment of the prison population to identify skill needs and better target program resources;
- addressing related barriers to employment for people with criminal convictions;
- sharing information efficiently among all involved; and evaluating the effectiveness of these initiatives.

In the Bureau, this goal is integrated with the development of the inmate skills initiative coordinated by the Inmate Skills Development Branch which was established in June 2003. This initiative encompasses a multi-tiered process which focuses on inmate skills assessment, individualized plan development, program linkage, and collaborative partnership building.

An Inmate Skills Assessment (ISA) tool is currently being developed as a web-based data entry application to collect assessment information from a variety of sources. The validation and reliability of this tool will be part of an on-going evaluation conducted as a joint effort amongst the involved agencies. Much of the information initially entered in the ISA comes from the Presentence Report prepared by OPPS officers during their field investigations. Efforts are underway to ensure the terminology utilized for data collection is consistent across agencies and can ultimately be shared through integrated automated data linkages.

The ISA will be administered at the beginning of an inmate’s incarceration to assess skill deficits and strengths. A broader conception of skills is being used to include: daily living; mental health; wellness; interpersonal; academic; cognitive; vocational; leisure time; and character. Each of these nine skills sets is further defined into specific subcategories of skill areas.

For example, within the academic skills category are questions regarding intellectual functioning, literacy, and language, as well as computer skills. Within the vocational/career category, an inmate is assessed for his/her employment history, career development, institutional work history, and employment plans for release including the status of documentation for an employment release portfolio.

continued on page 3



H.I.R.E. on the Hill

Alexa Eggleston and Gabrielle de la Gueronniere

President Bush's FY 2006 Budget Released; Includes Request for Additional Funding for Prisoner Reentry Initiative

President Bush recently released his fiscal year 2006 budget which includes funding requests for his four-year Prisoner Reentry Initiative. The President's budget requests that the Reentry Initiative receive \$75 million for its second year of funding, the same level of funding requested by the President in FY 2005. The FY 06 request represents a \$45 million increase over the FY 2005 funding amount actually allocated by Congress. According to the President's budget, the Department of Labor would receive \$35 million, the Department of Justice would receive \$15 million and the Department of Housing and Urban Development would receive \$25 million for this initiative. In addition, the President's Budget requests \$50 million for grants for the mentoring of children of prisoners.

According to the Department of Labor, last year the President's Reentry Initiative received \$30 million in funding, \$20 million through the Department of Labor and \$10 million for the Department of Justice. The Initiative is focused on helping formerly incarcerated people obtain job training and job placement services, transitional housing, and mentoring services.

House Education and Workforce Committee Approves Legislation to Reauthorize Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

The House of Representatives Education and Workforce Committee recently voted along party lines to approve the Republican-sponsored H.R. 27, the Job Training Improvement Act of 2005, a bill to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

[continued on page 4](#)

Information obtained through the ISA tool will automatically generate an Inmate Skills Development (ISD) Plan, which is used to document skill deficits and strengths and track progress throughout the incarceration period. Inmates are then linked to appropriate programs designed to address their specific skill deficits, providing priority placement to people who are deemed high risk (those most likely to recidivate).

The partners are working together to review the Bureau's apprenticeship, vocational training, and other programs to ensure they are consistent with industry-wide accepted skill sets. They are reviewing the composition of the current Trade Advisory Committees at each institution to link apprenticeships with the community. Additionally, through labor market forecasting, institutional apprenticeships and job training programs will be examined to ensure they meet the forecasted demands for the labor pool. The partners will also conduct a review of potential barriers prohibiting the formerly incarcerated from realizing employment in these training fields and develop supportive strategies to ensure people with criminal records can obtain needed employment.

An inmate's ISD Plan will be made accessible throughout their term of incarceration to other criminal justice components who will be involved in the ex-offenders return to the community. This will allow for a continuous up-to-date flow of information to assist in providing a continuum of care during the transition back into the community. Additionally, the ISD Plan will identify what documentation and resources have been obtained that assist directly with acquiring potential employment.

The Bureau has developed a mockup for a resource database which would provide information, nationwide, of the resources that exist for people with criminal records as they return to the community. The database would provide brief descriptions and contact information sorted by category of resource (e.g., employment, education, housing, transportation, medical assistance, etc.) or by state.

Together with their partners, the Bureau is identifying appropriate resources and links to be included in this database.

The overriding goal of the National Workforce Development Partnership is to provide a model of collaboration and identify resources that can be tapped into at the local levels to enhance skill development for successful employment of the formerly incarcerated.

For more information, please feel free to contact the Inmate Skills Development Branch at (202) 353-3598 or BOP-CPD/inmateskillsdvlp@bop.gov ❖

In general, the bill would consolidate funding for adult program activities, including job training, dislocated worker retraining, the employment service system, and reemployment grants and provide training programs for both out-of-school and in-school youth. It would reauthorize adult basic skills and family literacy education programs, Job Corp and vocational rehabilitation services under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

A number of amendments were offered during the committee mark-up (legislative review), however none dealt specifically with people with criminal records. Rep. Holt (D-NJ) offered an amendment to restore the \$750 million reduction in funding that has affected the program over the last several years. Despite support from several members the amendment failed after several others stated that there is sufficient funding currently in the job-training system. Rep. Tierney (D-MA) offered an amendment that would have reserved more of the youth funding for programs for in-school youth. Chairman Boehner stated that programs for out-of-school youth need more support and therefore the amendment was not necessary. The amendment was not approved. The full House is expected to consider H.R. 27 this week. It is unclear when companion legislation will move forward in the Senate.

Election Reform Legislation Introduced in the U.S. Senate; Includes Provisions to Restore Voting Rights to People with Felony Convictions Who Have Satisfied their Sentences; Companion House Bill to Follow

Last week, the “Count Every Vote Act of 2005” was introduced in the U.S. Senate. Introduced by Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and co-sponsored by Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), John Kerry (D-MA) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), the Count Every Vote Act of 2005 would amend the “Help America Vote Act of 2002” to provide comprehensive voting reforms to the Federal election system. Title 7 of the Act, cited as the “Civic Participation Act of 2005,” focuses exclusively on ensuring that people with criminal records who have fully served their sentences are not denied the right to vote. Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH) is expected to introduce companion legislation in the House of Representatives later this month.

The Civic Participation section of the Count Every Vote Act begins by noting that an estimated 4.7 million people in the United States, or 1 in 44 adults, cannot vote as a result of a felony conviction. The findings section also asserts that although State laws currently determine qualifications for voting in Federal elections, Congress has ultimate

[continued on page 5](#)



Funding Opportunities!



Primary Federal Funding Streams Available for People with Criminal Records

Gabrielle De La Gueronniere

U.S. Department of Justice

Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI)
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry/learn.html#serious>

The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) directs funding toward high-risk juveniles and adults returning to the community from the criminal justice system. Although some SVORI funds are utilized for in-prison services, services and supervision may also be covered under SVORI after reentry.

State and local governments can apply for SVORI funds. The Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs (OJP) developed the SVORI program and has outlined the goals of the initiative. SVORI funds are intended to enable communities to identify the current gaps in their reentry strategy and present a developmental vision for reentry that seeks to fill those gaps and sustain the overall strategy. Additionally, communities seeking SVORI funding are encouraged to use the funds to enhance existing reentry strategies with training and technical assistance that will build community capacity to effectively, safely, and efficiently reintegrate people who are returning from involvement in the criminal justice system.

Although information about SVORI can be found primarily through the DOJ’s Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and National Institute of Corrections (NIC), these agencies also work with the U.S. Departments of Education (ED), Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Labor (DOL) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Social Security Administration (SSA) which support the initiative.

Training Services for Corrections Professionals
<http://www.nicic.org/Services/TrainingServices.aspx>

The DOJ’s National Institute of Corrections provides a number of training programs to probation, parole and community corrections officers to help these individuals to better assist people in the criminal justice system. These training services often focus on how to better meet the needs of people leaving incarceration and reentering the community.

[continued on page 5](#)

supervisory power over Federal elections and is responsible for ensuring that the State laws are in accordance with the Constitution. The bill emphasizes that State disenfranchisement laws disproportionately impact ethnic minorities, and that although some states do have mechanisms in place to restore voting rights, few affected persons are successful in regaining their ability to vote.

The Count Every Vote Act would restore the right to vote in Federal elections to all individuals who have fully satisfied their sentence. Federal elections covered by this Act include the elections for the President, the Vice President, and Congressional Representatives or Senators. Individuals who, at the time of the election, are either serving a felony sentence in a correctional institution or facility or are on parole or probation for a felony offense would not be eligible to regain voting rights under this Act.

In addition, the Count Every Vote Act would require that States notify individuals who are eligible to have their voting rights restored. S. 450 would also establish enforcement mechanisms to ensure that the law is followed; the legislation would allow the Attorney General to bring suit to remedy violations of this Act and would also create a private right of action for individuals to challenge a violation of the Act. S. 450 also makes clear that States would not be precluded from developing less restrictive laws concerning voting rights.

The Count Every Vote Act was referred to the Senate Rules and Administration Committee after the bill's introduction where it now awaits review. ❖

Upcoming Conferences of Interest

March 30-April 2, 2005

16th National Youth Crime Prevention Conference and International Forum

Radisson Miami Hotel
Miami, FL
Tel: 305-670-2409

April 6-8, 2005

Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment

"Women Work! 2005 National Conference"

Hilton Crystal City
Arlington, VA
Tel: 202-467-6346

Information: www.womenwork.org

continued on page 6

Past training sessions have given corrections staff who provide employment assistance to people with criminal records additional technical assistance. Technical assistance provided under these programs includes distance learning, and other types of training for individuals who help to transition people from incarceration to securing jobs in their communities.

U.S. Department of Education:

Workplace and Community Transition Training for Incarcerated Youth Offender

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/transitiontraining/index.html>

The Workplace and Community Transition Training for Incarcerated Youth Offender program provides grants to the designated State Correctional Education Agencies (SCEA) to establish a postsecondary education or postsecondary vocational training program for eligible incarcerated youthful offenders. Overseen by the Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-free Schools, these grants are intended to assist people with a criminal record who are under 25 years of age within 5 years of their release.

Life Skills for State and Local Prisoners

http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/OCE/demo_proj.html

The Life Skills for State and Local Prisoners Program provides financial assistance for establishing and operating programs designed to reduce recidivism through the development and improvement of life skills necessary for reintegration of adult prisoners into society. Also a part of the Office of Drug-free Schools' Character, Civic, Correctional Education initiative, the Life Skills for State and Local Prisoners program is a discretionary grant program that provides funds for job training and life skills training. State and local correctional agencies or state and local correctional education agencies are eligible to apply for these funds.

Vocational Education: Basic Grants To States Program

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/ctesbg/index.html>
www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/

The Vocational Education Basic Grants to States program, administered by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, provides vocational-technical education programs and services to youth and adults. State boards for career and technical education are eligible to apply for these funds. Local educational agencies and postsecondary

continued on page 6

April 10-13, 2005

**National Correctional Industries Association (NCIA)
Enterprise 2005 National Training Conference and
Exposition: "Strategic Alliances: Dynamic Results"**

Hyatt Regency Hotel

Minneapolis, MN

Tel: 410-230-3972

Email: info@nationalcia.org

Information: <http://www.nationalcia.org/e2005/e2005.htm>

April 20-22, 2005

**Public/Private Ventures' Working Ventures: "Charting
the Course: Navigating New Directions in Workforce
Development"**

Dolce Tarrytown House

Tarrytown, NY

Tel: 212-822-2400

Information:

http://www.ppv.org/ppv/working_ventures/working_ventures_workshops.asp?section_id=6

May 1-4, 2005

**National Association of Workforce Development
Professionals 16th Annual Conference:
"Riding the Workforce Wave"**

Fontainebleau Hilton Hotel

Miami Beach, FL

Contact: www.nawdp.org

May 5-6, 2005

**2005 Fifth Annual Transitional Jobs Conference:
"Transitional Jobs: A Critical Reentry Employment
Strategy"**

Hilton Washington

Washington, DC

Email: izusman@heartlandalliance.org

Information: www.transitionaljobs.net

May 18-19, 2005

**The Workforce Alliance 2005 National Conference:
"What's the Big Idea? Workforce Development Policy
for the Next Four Years"**

Renaissance Hotel

Washington, DC

Contact: www.workforcealliance.org

July 18-20, 2005

NIJ Annual Research and Evaluation Conference

JW Marriott Hotel

Washington, DC

Contact: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>

continued on page 7

institutions are also eligible to receive sub-grants under this Basic Grants program. Although there is a limit to the amount grantees can use for youth and adults in state correctional institutions, these funding restrictions do not apply to money used for reentry programs for people transitioning from the criminal justice system.

U.S. Department of Labor:

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

<http://www.uses.doleta.gov/wotcdata.asp>

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a tax credit that functions as an incentive to employers who hire people with certain criminal records. The credit can provide up to \$2,400 per person per year in tax breaks for a full-time employer. The WOTC can also apply to an individual working part-time or completing summer youth work.

The WOTC is available to employers who employ people from one of eight targeted groups, including "qualified ex-felons." A "qualified ex-felon" is defined as an individual who (1) has a state or federal felony conviction; (2) is a member of an economically disadvantaged family and (3) is hired within in one year of release from prison or from date of conviction.

Federal Bonding Program

<http://www.doleta.gov/wtw/documents/fedbonding.cfm>

The Federal Bonding Program serves as a job placement tool by guaranteeing to an employer the job honesty of "at-risk," hard-to-place job applicants. People with criminal records are one of 5 groups who may be bonded. A total of \$5,000 in bond coverage is usually issued with no deductible for the employer.

Some employers may require their employees to be bonded as protection against money or property loss due to employee dishonesty. However, many private bonding agencies will not bond job applicants with criminal histories or other questionable past behaviors because they are often categorized as "at-risk" or "not bondable."

Being ineligible for private bonding insurance can be an additional employment barrier for many qualified job applicants with past criminal records. The Federal Bonding Program exists to help alleviate employers' concerns about hiring qualified, but "at-risk," job applicants.

continued on page 7

July 24-27, 2005

30th Annual American Probation and Parole Association Training Institute

Marriott Marquis
New York City, NY

Contact: <http://www.appa-net.org/Training%20and%20Tech%20Assistance/callfor1.htm>

September 11-14, 2005

**National TASC Conference on Drugs and Crime
Developing Safe and Healthy Communities: Recover, Reenter, Restore**

Renaissance Cleveland Hotel
Cleveland, OH

Contact: www.NationalTASC.org ❖

Purchasers of the bonds include state employment agencies, Workforce Investment Boards and One-Stop Centers, organizations employing people with criminal records, state departments of corrections, private sector organizations and veteran's initiatives.

Welfare-to-Work Program

<http://www.doleta.gov/wtw/resources/fact-grants.cfm>

The Welfare-to-Work Program provides grants to states and local communities to create additional job opportunities for the hardest-to-employ recipients of TANF benefits, including eligible people with criminal records. These grants will provide many welfare recipients with the job placement services, transitional employment, and other support services they need to make the successful progression into long-term unsubsidized employment.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

<http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/>

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides workforce training and placement services for a variety of individuals in the community, including individuals with criminal records. Local WIA one-stops provide core services, intensive services, and training services to eligible adults. All adults, including people with criminal records, are eligible for core services. The WIA Youth Activities program is also available to offer similar services for low-income youth.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Compassion Capital Fund

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccf/>

Funds from The Compassion Capital Fund (CCF), overseen by HHS's Administration on Children and Families and the White House Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, are aimed at helping faith-based and community groups build capacity and improve their ability to provide social services to those in need. The CCF administers two grant programs, the Demonstration Program and the Targeted Capacity-Building Program. The Demonstration Program, which allocates nearly all of the CCF funds, funds intermediary organizations that provide faith-based and community organizations training, technical assistance, and capacity-building sub-awards.



***Hot Off the Press:
Recent Reports***

Mentoring Children of Prisoners – Online Report, by Ann Adalist-Estrin and Dee Ann Newell, Mark Scott, Denise Johnston, Arlene Lee and Carol Burton of the Family and Corrections Network (February 2005). To download a copy of the report, visit www.fcnetwork.org.

Leaving the Street: Young fathers Move from Hustling to Legitimate Work, by Lauren J. Kotloff of Public/Private Ventures (February 2005). This report explores employment and hustling among men in Fathers at Work, a three-year national demonstration designed to help low-income, noncustodial fathers secure living-wage jobs, increase their involvement with their children and manage their child support obligations. To download the report, go to http://www.ppv.org/ppv/workforce_development/workforce_development_publications.asp?section_id=5#pub181

Barred for Life: Voting Rights Restoration in Permanent Disenfranchisement States, by Marc Mauer and Tushar Kansal of The Sentencing Project (February 2005). This report represents the first national survey of the restoration process in each of the 14 states that have permanent disenfranchisement laws. Information is presented on the frequently cumbersome, confusing and not widely used restoration process in these states, followed by policy recommendations to ease the restoration process. To see a copy of the entire report, visit <http://www.sentencingproject.org/pdfs/barredforlife.pdf>. ❖

continued on page 8

Friends of Island Academy

Youth, Employment and Reentry from Jail

Naeemah Sainte-Rose

Friends of Island Academy (FOIA) actively reach out to youth prior to their release from Rikers Island Correctional Facility, a New York City jail that is the largest penal colony in the world. Upon discharge, FOIA provides job training, counseling, education, mentoring, and youth leadership development. In return, participants are expected to stay out of trouble, take responsibility for themselves, and work to rebuild their lives.

Employment is a crucial factor in reducing recidivism. FOIA's employment department assists our members in obtaining full-time, part-time or temporary work (e.g. summer jobs). On average, the department places 150 youth into jobs each year. Of the post-release youth who are active in FOIA programs, just 5% return to jail compared to the citywide figure of 65%.

Each member attends our pre-employment workshop before job placement. The group workshop teaches interviewing skills, resume writing, appropriate dress and the "soft skills" of job retention such as punctuality, conflict resolution and positive social interaction.

The job readiness program is paralleled with computer training classes. Members are instructed in basic as well as advanced applications according to their level of computer literacy. These skills allow our graduates to succeed in a competitive job market.

In addition, we have teamed up with the National H.I.R.E. Network to assist our members in obtaining rap sheets (Records of Arrest and Prosecution) so that they can check for errors, be aware of what to say at a job interview and fill out an employment application accurately.

To find out more or request information about our employment services, please contact Beryl David at (212) 760-0755 x 233 or visit our website at www.foiany.org. ❖

Youth involved in the criminal justice system face a myriad of unique employment challenges. We want to make sure programs that provide services to youth know and understand the impact criminal records may have on their client's ability to obtain and maintain employment. Laurie Parise is leading our juvenile justice project. We encourage you to contact her via email at lparise@hirenetwork.org.

The Targeted Capacity-Building Program, also referred to as the "mini-grant program," directly funds faith-based and community organizations with one time \$50,000 awards for one year to build their capacity to deliver services to a number of different populations including at-risk youth and the homeless.

Since the program's inception in 2002 a total of \$99.5 million has been given directly to over 200 organizations. CCF monies have been awarded to faith-based and community organizations implementing programs that address the needs of people reentering from the criminal justice system, the homeless, elderly, at-risk youth, families in transition from welfare to work, and those in need of intensive rehabilitation such as people with drug addiction.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF)
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofa/>

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program, which replaced the federal welfare system, provides assistance and work opportunities to needy families by granting states the federal funds and wide flexibility to develop and implement their own welfare programs.

Technical Assistance to Develop Transitional Jobs Programs: Cities, counties, states, CDCs and nonprofit organizations can apply to receive 18 months of technical assistance to establish innovative job programs for residents with barriers to work. Transitional jobs are time-limited, subsidized jobs that combine real work, skill development, and support services to help participants overcome substantial barriers to employment, including a criminal record. A consortium of organizations – the National Transitional Jobs Network, Center for Employment Opportunities, Transitional Work Corporation, and National League of Cities – is seeking proposals from entities operating within a city or other defined region with a population over 50,000 to receive expert assistance in designing local transitional jobs programs. *The deadline to apply is March 15, 2005.* For more information, please contact Laura Zusman at the National Transitional Jobs Network at (312) 660-1345 or via email at lzusman@heartlandalliance.org. ❖

Advocacy on the Legal Front

Roberta Meyers-Peeples

All across the country there are public interest law firms, and some large private firms that offer pro bono services, fighting to increase employment opportunities for people with criminal records through litigation. In upcoming issues of the National H.I.R.E. Network News, we will be highlighting some of the local victories that have been achieved in states like California, Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York, which remind us that there are legal advocates who are unsung heroes fighting to maintain and open up employment opportunities for thousands of qualified workers across many industries. The HIRE Network believes it is important to recognize the efforts of these legal advocates, who are working to ensure that qualified job seekers and workers with criminal histories are given fair opportunities in the labor force and in many cases often face adversaries such as large government employers with abundant legal resources, or burdensome bureaucratic agencies.

Be on the look out for guest writers and stories told by some of the leading legal advocates around the country about small victories that will assist people in their communities, but that could also help us all learn about methods to bring challenges to unfair employment policies in your own state. ❖

Washington Weekly Roundup

Alexa Eggleston and Gabrielle de la Gueronniere

A publication of the Legal Action Center's Washington, DC office, this newsletter highlights the activities of Congress, federal agencies and non-profits that are relevant to individuals working in the drug prevention, treatment and research fields, as well as individuals who work in the criminal justice system and on criminal justice related issues. The Roundup includes reports on federal legislation, Congressional hearings, briefings, and other newsworthy events in DC of relevance to the above-mentioned fields. The Roundup is published every Friday that Congress is in session. If you would like to be added to the Roundup distribution list, please email Willieree Murray at wmurray@lac-dc.org and include your email address as well as your complete contact information. To view our most recent Roundup, visit <http://www.lac.org/news/wwr/2005/roundup022205.pdf>

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