

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
Public Act 166 of 2022
Article 2, Section 404
Workforce Development Program Results

Sec. 404. (1) From the funds appropriated in part 1, the department shall design services for offender success and vocational education programs, collaborating with the department of labor and economic opportunity and local entities to the extent deemed necessary by the director. The department shall ensure the program provides relevant professional development opportunities to prisoners who are high quality, demand driven, locally receptive, and responsive to the needs of the communities where the prisoners are expected to reside after their release from correctional facilities.

Sec. 404 (2) By March 1, the department shall provide a report detailing the results of the workforce development program.

After opening in 2021, the MDOC's newest Vocational Village at Women's Huron Valley (WHV) Correctional Facility in Ypsilanti had its first Villagers parole in 2022. Like the two other Vocational Villages, the WHV Village offers career and technical training in number of in-demand fields. These include: carpentry, commercial truck driving, cosmetology, 3D printing/robotics, food technology/hospitality, and horticulture.

Students in Parnall Correctional Facility's CDL program have continued to find success within the trucking industry since the inception of the program. Because of this, the Department has opened two new CDL programs, one at Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility, and the other at Kinross Correctional Facility. In this program, students complete CDL theory training, and can earn a temporary learners permit (TIP) and a commercial learners permit (CLP). Once a student paroled, they can enroll at a partner CDL training facilities to complete on the road training. The Department works closely with Michigan Works and the Offender Success Administrative Agencies to ensure students are approved for training assistance necessary to earn their CDL post-release. This program prepares students for employment in one of the most in-demand vocations in the State.

Many factors are considered when choosing what career and technical education programs to add within the MDOC. Labor market trends are reviewed to see how many jobs are available and projected to be available within the State. Employer demand and support is considered to determine if there are employers willing to hire returning citizens in their industry. The student population is assessed to see their interest and aptitude within any program before consideration. All programs result in an industry or state recognized credential issued by an entity other than the Department, so students parole with documentation similar to what they would receive from completing similar programs at a community college or other training site.

One example of the Department's efforts is the MDOC partnership with DTE Energy, which was leveraged to develop and launch a program to train returning citizens for careers in tree trimming, helping to fill open, in-demand positions. This program launched in 2019, and trains students to safely climb trees, use tree trim equipment and obtain a Commercial Driver's License. Once released on parole, students who have completed the tree trim program are eligible to join the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 17 Union and fill an open role with local tree trim suppliers.

To ensure public safety, reduce recidivism, and connect returning citizens with employment opportunities, the Michigan Department of Corrections has continued to increase its workforce development programs statewide. To accomplish these goals, the department has placed an emphasis on creating employer

partnerships, breaking down barriers to employment, hosting hiring events, and preparing our job seekers for employers' expectations through workforce development and vocational programming.

In 2018, the Department created the Offender Employment and Opportunities Unit (OEOU). The creation of this unit has given the Department the ability to develop, and maintain direct relationships with employers, engage in training opportunities, and develop programs that lead to sustainable employment for returning citizens.

As of January 2023, OEOU has direct relationships with 552 employers throughout Michigan. The Department uses their employer connections to place returning citizens, and probationers into open employment and training opportunities. The Department also uses these connections to ensure vocational training opportunities offered within correctional facilities are being provided in in-demand industries and meet the standards necessary for employment post-release.

To increase the likelihood of employment for returning citizens, and to protect employers, the Department has partnered with the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity to bond eligible returning citizens through the Fidelity Bonding program. The Fidelity Bonding program provides employer's bonding coverage between \$5,000 and \$25,000 each, to protect against theft, larceny, forgery, and embezzlement for the first 6 months of employment, free of charge. From October 1st, 2021, to September 30th, 2022, OEOU has assisted with the fidelity bonding of 78 returning citizens for employment.

During the spring and summer months of 2022, the OEOU facilitated six job fairs throughout the Lower Peninsula. Two events took place in Wayne County, and one event each was hosted in Kent, Genesee, Oakland, and Macomb counties. OEOU partnered with the relevant parole and probation offices, Offender Success Administrative Agencies, community employment agencies, and local employers to plan the events and discuss what employment positions were needed in each county. Returning citizens were given opportunities to practice with mock interviews and build quality resumés prior to attending the job fairs.

In total, 390 returning citizens and 184 employers/vendors attended the job fairs statewide. Additionally, dozens of in-person or on-site interviews were conducted as a result of the hiring events to provide opportunities that help returning citizens successfully integrate back into their communities.

Employment Data for Vocational Village Graduates, through September 2022

- Employment rate of graduates active on parole: **69%**
- Return to prison rate: **11.1%**
- Graduates that are on active parole: **216**
- Graduates that have paroled from the Vocational Village: **1483**
- Graduates that have successfully discharged parole: **923**
- Graduates that have returned to prison: **164**