

Life After Prison: Overcoming Barriers to Employment

There are currently over one million women in the U.S. criminal justice system. Two hundred thousand of them are confined in state and federal prisons or local jails. Women are the fastest growing group of people in prison. However, the consequences of their convictions far outlast time spent in confinement or on parole. Since the 1990s, various levels of government have created more post-conviction penalties, making it harder for women leaving prison to find employment, education and housing. There are, however, groups who can help.

CHALLENGES

A year after prison, only four in ten women are able to find jobs in the regular labor market.

Employment

In most states, employers can deny jobs to anyone with a criminal record, regardless of work history or how long ago they were convicted. State laws can also keep past prisoners from getting licences in different types of professions.

Further Education

All forms of federal tuition assistance are unavailable to a person with a drug conviction, making further education difficult.

Federal Assistance

Federal law says that people with drug convictions cannot receive food stamps or other forms of state assistance.



HELP WITH HOUSING

Affordable, reliable housing is one of the most immediate needs women have to deal with after being released from prison. There are several options depending on the area.

Subsidized Housing Options

- ◆ Federally Subsidized Housing (Section 8)
- ◆ City Subsidized Housing (local Housing Authorities)
- ◆ Transitional Housing
- ◆ Supportive Housing
- ◆ Single Room Occupancy (SRO)



Housing Support Services

The Women's Prison Association (WPA) Housing Placement and Retention Assistance program offers:

- ◆ Housing readiness assessment
- ◆ Housing search assistance after release
- ◆ Network of emergency shelter providers

The WPA Housing Manual

The Women's Prison Association Housing Manual is designed to help people through the entire process of a housing search.

The manual is available free of charge by visiting www.wpaonline.org. Go to Resources, then Toolkit, then WPA Housing Toolkit.

HELP FINDING A JOB

The Women's Prison Association (WPA)

The WPA's Employment Readiness, Placement and Retention Assistance program offers:

- ◆ Job readiness training and search clinics
- ◆ Mock interviews
- ◆ Help learning computer skills
- ◆ Help preparing a resume
- ◆ Help finding and getting into vocational training
- ◆ Help developing personal search strategies

Contact the **Women's Prison Association** at 212-674-1163 or visit them online at www.wpaonline.org

The Legal Action Center (LAC)

The LAC helps to increase employment opportunities for people with criminal records through training, technical assistance and other services.

The LAC National HIRE Network

The LAC National HIRE Network is a directory of services focused on helping people released from prison find employment.

Visit the **National HIRE Network** online at www.hirenetwork.org.

For more information, contact the **Legal Action Center** at 1-800-223-4044 or visit them online at www.lac.org.

The Next Step

The Next Step provides job placement services across the country.

Contact **The Next Step** at 800-498-2207 or visit them online at www.thenextstep99.com

WEB RESOURCES BY STATE

The National HIRE Network

List of resources, information, and assistance by state: www.hirenetwork.org/resource.html

The Human Rights Watch

Resources for prisoners and their families by state: www.hrw.org/prisons/states/state.htm



Other Resources

A Useful Book:

The Ex-Inmate's Complete Guide to Successful Employment by Erroll Craig Sull (2000 edition)

Resources on Beginning a Basic Job Search:

Women Work! offers a *Finding a Job* Tip Sheet. Visit the Resources and Services section of www.womenwork.org. It is also available by calling (202) 467-6346.

Advocacy resources:

The Sentencing Project
202-628-0871

www.sentencingproject.org