



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**



**Office of Family Assistance PeerTA Network**  
**“Providing Effective Employment and Supportive Services to Low-Income Women with Criminal Records”**  
**Webinar Transcript**  
**July 22, 2015**  
**2:00 p.m. Eastern Time**

**Presenters:**

- **Lisa Washington-Thomas, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**
- **Brent Orrell, ICF International**
- **Julie Scrapchansky, Connecticut’s STRIDE**
- **Kelly Doyle, Oklahoma Center for Employment Opportunities**
- **Reverend Vivian Nixon, College and Community Fellowship**

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to the “Providing Effective Employment and Supportive Services to Low-Income Women with Criminal Records” webinar.

During the presentation, all participants will be in a listen-only mode. If you would like to ask a question during the presentation, please use the chat feature located in the lower left corner of your screen.

If you need to reach an operator at any time, please press “Star 0.” As a reminder, this conference is being recorded Wednesday, July 22, 2015. I would now like to turn the conference over to Lisa Washington-Thomas, Branch Chief at the Office of Family Assistance. Please go ahead.

Lisa Washington-Thomas: Thank you. Good afternoon. I want to thank everyone for joining today's webinar. We are happy to have a great line of expert presenters discuss this important topic. We designed this event as a way to share the research and strategies to overcome challenges faced by female ex-offenders.



Our conversation today — we'll discuss — the effect of incarceration — the effect that incarceration has on women, and we'll explore strategies utilized by three programs to overcome barriers to employment and other challenges faced by women reentering society. We will focus primarily on innovative uses of case management, education and training, and employment strategies, but issues related to housing and parenting will be discussed as well.

Webinar participants will hear from four presenters today — three who work in programs that are currently employing strategies to help low-income women overcome the barrier of a criminal record, find and maintain employment, and move their families out of poverty.

We'll be asking, "What are — how are the challenges that women ex-offenders face different from those faced by other low-income women without a criminal record? What services do agencies provide to help overcome the barrier of criminal records? Which education and training and employment strategies show the most promise and for which populations? How can this information be used to assist TANF agencies in providing services to female ex-offenders?" These questions will be addressed and answered during today's webinar.

Our related learning objectives include: understanding the effect a criminal record has on a woman's ability; define and maintain employment; learning about key case management, education and training, and employment strategies needed to provide effective services to women with a criminal background; and hearing about



lessons learned and programs that are providing supports and services to women reentering society.

We are very fortunate to have a group of dynamic experts guiding our conversation today and helping us to understand the multidimensional challenges faced by women with criminal records. More importantly, this group of programmatic experts will share solutions used to help female ex-offenders successfully reenter society. Throughout the presentation, you will have the opportunity to ask questions through the chat box in the bottom left corner of your screen.

We encourage you to ask these questions, and if your question is for a specific presenter or program, please be sure to specify that. If we do not get to everyone's questions, we will provide a Q and A that will appear on the PeerTA Web site, along with a transcript and audio recording of today's webinar.

During this webinar we — there will also be a series of polling questions that will appear on your screen. Please answer each by clicking on the radio button next to your selected response. Doing so will not only help us guide the discussion, but will also share additional information that may inform your practice.

Our first presenter today is Brent Orrell. Brent is the Vice-President at ICF International with over 20 years of experience working in legislative and executive branches of our government. In his most recent federal role, he served as the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, where he oversaw the nation's \$10 billion Workforce Investment Act System.



ETA oversees discretionary and formula funding for programs on workforce development, youth employment and development, and prisoner reentry among others. Mr. Orrell will provide us with some context for understanding these issues and will present recent data surrounding employment services to female ex-offenders.

Additionally, he will share information on the government initiatives that provide funding for organizations providing employment services to low-income women with criminal records. Next, we will have — we will hear from our first program presenter, and that's Julie Scrapchansky from the STRIDE program and Quinebaug Valley Community College in Connecticut.

STRIDE, a 10-week employment-related program for male and female inmates, is a unique state-funded reentry workforce development program operating within the Administrative Services Division at QVCC in Danielson, Connecticut. In her capacity as Program Director, Ms. Scrapchansky collaborates with five other state of Connecticut agencies — QVCC, Department of Social Services, Department of Corrections, Department of Labor, and the Judicial Branch.

We will then hear from Kelly Doyle, The Center for Employment Opportunities, Oklahoma. Ms. Doyle has been working in the field of prisoner reentry for the last six years. Prior to her working in criminal justice, she was the administrator for a disaster relief organization completing tours in Sudan, Kenya, and other areas



affected by Hurricane Katrina. Ms. Doyle will also discuss CEO's mission and their work in Oklahoma.

Finally, we will hear from Reverend Vivian Nixon, Executive Director of College and Community Fellowship — an organization committed to removing individual and structural barriers to higher education for women with criminal record histories and their families. She identifies her most valued and life-changing — experiences — experience as the time she spent as a peer educator in the Adult Basic Education program at Albion State Correctional Facility in New York. Reverend Nixon will discuss the mission of CCF and the strategies that CCF has implemented to aid formerly incarcerated women in escaping the cycles of poverty and criminal recidivism. Reverend Nixon will also provide insights into strategies while removing individual and structural barriers to higher education for women with criminal records.

So I would like to ask the first polling question. "How knowledgeable are you about the employment challenges faced by women with criminal backgrounds?" And I'll give you a few seconds to answer. Okay, thank you very much, and I'll turn this over to Brent.

Brent Orrell:

Great, thank you Lisa, and thanks to everybody for your attendance for this afternoon on this very important topic of returning citizens who are women and the challenges and the opportunities that face us in trying to assist these populations.

My role here today is to provide some context around the national statistics as they relate to reentry generally, as well as the picture



as it affects women in particular, and then to give a little bit of information on some of the recent developments at the level of policy and program at the federal level to help inform the discussion about the types of services that our other presenters are providing.

So we'll go to the first of my slides here, which is to provide the National Incarceration Profile. At the end of 2012, the U.S. had over 2.2 million people in prisons and jails, or about 700 people per 100,000 of population, which places us very near the top of all countries in the world in terms of the number of people that we incarcerate.

Since 1980, the U.S. prison population has risen from 300,000 to 1.5 million. An additional 4.8 million adults were under supervision during this period, and that means being on probation or parole. One in 31 U.S. adults is either in prison, jail, or under post-release supervision — that's 1 in 18 men, 1 in 89 women, 1 in 11 African Americans, and 1 in 27 Latinos.

67% of those released from prison are rearrested for a new crime within three years, and 51% of those who are released from prison then return to serve additional time in prison. So in terms of female incarceration, the numbers are quite striking. The number of women in prison has risen by over 600% since 1980.

As of 2010, over 1 million women are incarcerated or on probation and parole. African American women are incarcerated at three times the rate of white women and 1.6 times the rate of Latino women. Most female prisoners have been convicted of —



for nonviolent property or drug crimes. This is at variance with men, who tend to be involved more heavily in violent crimes.

73% of women in prison have a diagnosed mental health issue, and 62% of female prisoners have children. So moving now to the justice reform and program context, there were significant shifts in federal reentry policy since the mid-2000's. This was driven in large part because of the response to states and communities that were being impacted by reentry and recidivism.

I think as most people on the call probably know, there's a very small number of zip codes that receive the large — the bulk of individuals who are — bulk of returning citizens so that — there's a very heavy impact in — particularly in the urban areas of the country. And so in response to that, there were a number of legislative and program initiatives beginning in the Bush administration that continuing in the Obama administration.

One of the principal ones was the passage of the Second Chance Act in 2007, 2008 when that was signed into law. And the Second Chance Act provides a wide range of demonstration grants focusing on expanding and enhancing reentry services for youth and adults engaged in the correctional system, and I provided a link there where you can go to the Council of State Governments to look at a more detailed description of the types of programs that are funded through the Second Chance Act.

In addition or even as part of that Second Chance Act, there's a significant amount of new federal work being done through the U.S. Department of Labor — two principal programs — one called, "Training to Work," which is focused on adults — adult



populations — and "Face Forward," which is focused on youth populations — and those programs really focus on providing comprehensive social services supports for reentry populations — youth and adult — with a focus on transitions into employment.

In addition, the Office of Family Assistance has a small pilot and demonstration project through the Responsible Fatherhood program called "Responsible Fatherhood Opportunities for Reentry and Mobility." Those grants were actually just competed and are in the process of being reviewed right now.

And then the final item that I wanted to mention is the "Bipartisan Criminal Justice Reform Initiative." Reentry and justice reform are one of those rare issues in Washington, D.C. in which there is a very broad bipartisan consensus. There's legislation in both the House and the Senate right now that would look both at reentry issues, but also at sentencing reform to help slow the rate of people actually entering prison, and that initiative has, as I said, very broad bipartisan support and has a lot of momentum, and we're expecting further action by Congress this year and next year.

So that's the broad context. And I think at this point I'm going to hand it back to Lisa to do the next polling question.

Lisa Washington-Thomas: Thanks Brent. Our next question is, "Which do you think is the most helpful strategy in overcoming the barrier of a criminal record?" And your choices are: education, job search, or job placement. Many of you have said, "Job placement." So I now will turn this over to Julie Scrapchansky.





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Julie Scrapchansky:

Hi, good afternoon. I'd like to describe to you our unique model of reentry, transitional support workforce development program — the STRIDE program — located at Quinebaug Community College in Danielson, Connecticut and at the Department of Labor New Hamden office.

The STRIDE program is supported by a groundbreaking collaboration between the state of Connecticut State College and Universities, the Board of Regents for Higher Education, the Department of Labor, the Department of Correction, Department of Social Services, and the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch — the Support Enforcement Unit.

It's funded through the Connecticut State Legislature. Participants are empowered to reach their career aspirations and move towards financial independence to reclaim their life and return to parenthood and become productive taxpayers — in this — in their state.

Part of the eligibility for the criteria for our program — you must be currently incarcerated at one of the participating correctional facilities that we service our clients to, which is Bridgeport Correctional Center, Corrigan-Radgowski Correctional Center, Niantic Annex Correctional Center, Willard-Cybulski Correctional Center, and New York CI. You must be a non-custodial parent of a child under the age of 25, and you would have to had been receiving state assistance prior to or within the State of Connecticut.

You must be committed to becoming employed and plan to remain in the state of Connecticut and you must be able to keep



scheduled appointments both pre- and post- release. The STRIDE program has successfully reduced recidivism through job readiness class instruction in the prisons, and as that continues, in the educational support of our prisons that occurs throughout the state of Connecticut.

This unique program is also well integrated within the community college fabric and it embraces, it supports, and includes an all too often disenfranchised and stigmatized population in the educational and learning process. We strongly believe that having this program at a community college is critical to its success and important for many reasons for the participants and their families as well as the community itself and for the college.

The program fits well into the Quinebaug Valley Community College mission statement, and it's all about helping people in our communities to improve their lives through education and how they turn around and make the college stronger and more successful. By helping this segment of our population to succeed out of prison, we are making our community stronger and safer and in turn, the college is expanding our thinking of what we should be doing and how it is allowing us to achieve our mission at even a higher level.

This benefits the college as much as it benefits the community and our participants. As with any community college, we embrace the strong relationships and ties to our community, yet this population has typically not been embraced. Our program not only works with this segment of our community, but being a part of it, it helps break down the barriers this group experiences,



especially with employers. People look more positively at a program by it being affiliated with a college. We help to create a more educated workforce for our communities, meeting employers' needs for the population that wants to contribute and make it on their own.

Everyone here today listening understands how critical lifelong education is to the success and the well-being of society and to all citizens. This program emphasizes the importance of education to the participants and encourages them to pursue education upon their release into the community.

While in the program, they are admitted to the college, become noncredit students, and are provided with information on how to then register for credit classes, where they can receive short-term training that can lead to a living wage job or continue on for more education at the associate or bachelor level. As their confidence grows, they can become successful in college.

Connecticut statewide reentry has six reentry roundtables across the state. They include Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, Southeastern Connecticut, Waterbury, and Windham. Each roundtable is made up of state and local organizations working together to identify and address the needs and gaps in services for local individuals returning from home from incarceration.

The roundtables meet quarterly to address regional concerns, issues, and push for legislative and policy changes around reentry for both women and men. The STRIDE program has been involved with statewide collaborative since 2010. The STRIDE



program founded and currently facilitates the Women Reentry Council.

The Council addresses numerous issues facing individuals returning to rural community. Since our program provides services to individuals returning home throughout the state, STRIDE will send a representative to each roundtable to ensure they are informed on all reentry supports and services in each community.

Most recently, the STRIDE program has become a co-chair for the Greater Hartford Reentry roundtable, where they have been part of several community projects: an active sponsor for the third year for the Greater Hartford Reentry Employment and Resource Fair, working on a proposal for a reentry services center for the leadership of the Greater Hartford Second Chance team for the City of Hartford, working with the Department of Corrections and the Department of Motor Vehicles to increase the number of inmate identifications prior to release into the community, working on increasing the number of stakeholders who participate in the roundtables to include the City of Hartford, and working on addressing around the barriers around suitable housing for those who have been formerly incarcerated.

I will walk you quickly through the STRIDE program, what we do as the career specialists for men and women who are parents who must be currently incarcerated and on some sort of state assistance — TANF, SNAP — and they plan to reside in Connecticut.



There are two major components to STRIDE, both pre- and post-release. I'll begin by discussing the pre-release component. They begin a 10-week class meeting with a career specialist twice a week to discuss workforce development topics. In addition, we meet with participants individually for case management to create a holistic transitional plan.

We begin by determining the motivation of our participants, and we build on it by helping individuals identify their skillset. We identify hard skills and soft skills, punctual, good attitude, computer skills. Once individuals are able to identify their skillset, they begin to see their potential. This, in turn, increases their level of motivation.

We teach them how to highlight their skills when answering the question, "Why should I hire you?" The 30-second pitch that catches the attention of an employer or how to answer the stigmatizing question of, "Tell me about your felony." The class lasts five weeks of a 10-week class spent practicing mock interviews.

We also have each participant perfect a sample application, thank you letter, and cover letter. This process helps the individual to gain in their upcoming job search and enhances their literacy and numeracy skills. They are then better prepared to enter the job market. Upon completion of the class, participants will receive a certificate.

As we focus on our female participants at York Correctional, we have noticed several issues surrounding unhealthy relationships and relapse once they are released into the community. This has



led to reduced outcomes in employment and an increased rate of recidivism over the past year. There are several contributing factors, such as mental health and substance abuse issues, but the most important factor is that many of them have experienced some form of trauma in their life.

Some even have had to list incarceration has traumatized them. In order to address some of these issues, we went to one of our local providers in the Connecticut Woman's Consortium and discussed what we could do to enhance our workforce development curriculum. It was recommended we try Healing Trauma. It provides short-term intervention strategies to women recovering from effects of trauma and finds ways to help them enjoy healthy relationships and live happier lives.

We have incorporated this curriculum into our strategies and into our weekly sessions, as well as look to increase knowledge and skills of the teachers who specialize in workshops and trainings at the Connecticut Woman's Consortium. At — in addition, at York Correctional, there is a facilitator providing a more in-depth program at the facilities, and they refer a client to get trauma-based care.

STRIDE participants are introduced to two incentive programs — they can — we can offer them: the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the Federal Bonding Program. These programs both help men and women secure employment, and we are able to distribute these bonds to our participants. Second part of the STRIDE program was the post-release support, where a job developer will



meet with a participant in the community at a library or a Connecticut Works Office.

Our goal is to continue to the workforce development piece, but also to get them to begin to think long-term, “What are your career goals? Five years from now, what do you want from your life?” Many times, we provide them with guidance and support in a positive reinforcement often lacking in their lives. Prior to release, job developers will meet with individuals in classes inside the prison, focusing on what they should be prepared for once they are released regarding their participation and their reintegration into the community; specifically, job developers discuss their own roles in the program, as well as the current job market in reasonable expectations on job attainment.

This includes proper interviewing skills and proper etiquette when interacting with prospective employers. Shortly after release, job developers will meet with participants in designing areas to develop goals, discuss their particular situations regarding their desired location, and their specific areas to employment.

During the first meeting, participants receive their care package. In the care package, participants can expect to find a flash drive containing their current resume, cover letter, and thank you letter to be used during their job search. In addition, participants receive a clothing voucher, a 30-day — one — a 30 one-day bus pass, and a list of resources pertaining to the area and a professional portfolio.

When we meet with our participants, we will set short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals focusing on their specific



personal, career, and educational needs. Within the goals that are developed, participants are encouraged to focus on developing healthy relationships with their families, identify various barriers and challenges to their recovery, as well as the appropriate referrals based on the needs of the participants and their families, local food pantries, fatherhood programs, counseling centers.

Job developers act as the face of the STRIDE program in the community, meeting with employers and community partners to advocate for STRIDE participants. During the meetings with the employers, job developers promote the STRIDE program by emphasizing the benefits of hiring STRIDE participants. Benefits include the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Federal Bonding, and the ability of the employer to take an active role in the community. Job developers often earn the trust and gain credibility with the employer prior to introductions with prior participants.

During this time, job developers have the opportunity to change employers' perception about ex-offenders with the hope of linking participant skills with employer needs. Most of our participants — do not have a — have not had a positive experience in high school.

Many have dropped out and not finished school. Part of what the STRIDE program tries to do is work on a holistic plan setting, with goals with participants, both pre- and post-release, while helping them find employment is key to turning their lives around.





Furthering their education goes hand-in-hand, whether it is finishing that GED, going on a specialized workforce training program or postsecondary, we encourage them to pursue their educational goals. The — why do these programs happen and why is reentry so important? Specifically, public safety, the cost savings to the state of Connecticut, the reduction in recidivism rate, the cost of incarceration, and the consequences to the participants and their family — it's all about breaking the cycle.

Thank you, and I'd like to now introduce you to the Center for Employment Opportunities' Kelly Doyle.

Kelly Doyle:

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you so much for attending the call. My name is Kelly Doyle, and I am the State Director for the Center for Employment Opportunities in Oklahoma, and we've been in Oklahoma for about 11 years. Some of you may have heard of our program. We're originally from New York, and we're now in a few states.

So I think I would start by telling you how important it is for — the power of work in an ex-offender's life, but you are all on this call because you probably know that. And in Oklahoma or Tulsa County specifically, 87% of the women who were incarcerated from our county in 2009 were unemployed at the time of their arrest.

We know that when someone is working, they are less likely to return to jail, and yet we also know that employers are less likely to consider an applicant that has a criminal conviction. And so that is why the Center for Employment Opportunity exists.



We believe that if somebody wants a job, that they should have the support necessary to find a job. About 30% of the participants that we work with in Oklahoma are women and, you know, we understand that participants have other needs in their lives, and we definitely do our best to help them find resources with regard to substance abuse treatment and mental health, but until someone is willing and able or very close to able to work, then they might not be ready for CEO.

We work exclusively on employment. We wish we could be all things to all people, but by focusing on employment, we have great success. So CEO is — was founded in New York City. It's in all the boroughs in New York. After a very rigorous evaluation in 2004, they determined that the program was able to reduce recidivism by as much as 20%, which was an evaluation conducted MDRC.

They said, "Okay, does it work anywhere else?" So they started with upstate New York, then we went to Oklahoma, California, and we've actually just opened an office in Pennsylvania. So why are we in Oklahoma? Well, in Oklahoma, we incarcerate more women per capita than any other state. It's certainly a statistic we're not proud of and has primarily to do with our sentencing laws, and, you know, even Texas and states that are around us that are very similar politically in nature have lower incarceration rates than we do -- we're always in the Top 4 with men as well -- so there's just a lot of need here for reentry services.

So, very simply, how our program works— we work exclusively with men and women on probation or parole. We work with



federal, state, and also those who are coming on probation straight from county jails. They go through a four-day work readiness preparation where we get their documents together for work, we talk to them about their conviction question, filling out applications, resume, and expectations on the job site.

On the last day of that training, we give them a pair of steel toed boots and a passport to success to evaluate their work, and on Monday, they are working for our organization and earning a paycheck. They work for us 4 days a week, 6.5 hours a day, and on the fifth day, they're meeting with our vocational staff to leverage that job into a permanent job in the community, but we've found that by hiring individuals ourselves and teaching them the soft skills that they need to find and maintain work that we're able to better match participants with employers, know them better, screen them better, and also really get down to the issues they may be having with finding or keeping jobs.

So after they've been placed, we stay with them for a year, and we stay with them very successfully for a year by paying them every month to come back and visit us. So that's our program in a nutshell. In Tulsa last year, we served about 282 people and found 179 full-time permanent job placements; our average wage is \$9.24. Our minimum wage in Oklahoma is \$7.25.

Less than half of our participants have a GED or high school diploma. Many don't have very much work experience, so we actually find this wage to be pretty good for our program just starting three years in the state. The pictures that you're looking at are actually two of our participants cleaning up after a tornado



that hit Moore, Oklahoma in 2013 — so our participants are put to work through our organization working with public sector partners primarily doing a variety of beautification projects, maintenance, light construction, lots of landscaping, whole lot of weed eating.

Okay, so I — in considering the participants on the phone, you know, I thought, why would you want to listen to a webinar like this, and my thinking is that — you're probably — many of you are interacting on a daily basis with women who've been in the criminal justice system and who are looking for work and, you know, if you can partner with an organization like CEO or STRIDE, that's a great way to go about helping them to hold them accountable for attending that program, to encourage that they participate, but if you don't have something like that in your community or if you're working with someone who's not eligible for those programs, then there are some things that you can do to help them find work on your own.

One caveat to all of this — I just want to mention — is that sometimes the problem may not be the conviction. Yes, the conviction is going to be a big hurdle to get over, but there are often just basic job searching things that — they are — our participants are doing incorrectly that are making them appear like unattractive candidates for work — so that's the big, you know, just something to consider.

So — helpful hints when you're working with folks that might have a felony — we want to encourage them not to call themselves a "felon" or a "convict," particularly walking into an



employment establishment and saying, "Do you hire felons?" You know not a whole lot of employers are going to jump on that, so we also don't want them to identify their entire lives as a "felon," and so we want them to begin to refer themselves as a person who has a felony conviction.

Participants often need accountability partners. It is a very tough log to find a job when you have a felony conviction, and people often need somebody to encourage them and hold them accountable so that when the going gets tough that they don't give up. We find often that organizations like to create what they call "felon-friendly employer lists." We strongly discourage organizations from printing these, distributing them, putting them out as pamphlets — that kind of thing — we found that employers get very upset if they learn that they are on one of these lists, almost to the point where we've seen some stop hiring people with convictions or get overrun with applicants with convictions.

If you would like to keep a list of your own where, you know, people have given past clients a chance, do so, but give out leads individually and with the person's skills and abilities in mind. I find now that in today's world, a lot of our participants are using sites like SnagAJob or other resume blasting companies, and they — it's just not the most effective way to get your resume out there. Temp agencies also seems to be a real go-to, as well as blind ads, and the reality is, our participants are not going to be prioritized at temp agencies, nor through these type of companies.

What I have highlighted is targeting locally controlled companies. If the company has its hiring managers or the people that — are



— control hiring policies local, you have a better chance encouraging them to hire somebody that has a conviction or in getting in front of them to plead your case as an applicant for why you should work there. If you're going to big box stores or chains, the likelihood of them hiring you definitely decreases, as they use third party verifiers, and the rest.

Managing expectations — another previous speaker talked about this. We do try to prepare our participants that they may have to start at the bottom, and that can be a really tough thing. You know, people may have gone to prison, feel like they paid their debt to society and are ready to start, you know, start back in the life that they had, and sometimes that's just not possible, and proving themselves may be something that they are going to have to do.

Consider transportation, curfews, you know — a lot of folks that come out — especially if they're on probation or parole — may have curfews. They're not going to be able to work that third shift — transportation, particularly in Oklahoma, is incredibly challenging, and most of our folks do not have driver's licenses, and so, there are amazing third shift manufacturing jobs at Broken Arrow — our folks can't get there, so we can't send them there.

Triggers — I put this here because a lot of women in particular may have substance abuse or addiction issues.

Restaurants — there are going to be certain employers or work environments that may not be healthy placements for the people that we're working with, so it's good to take into account what the person's specific issues are and whether the environment is going



to be a healthy place for them, and I know that's challenging, because you are already up against so many barriers. You really just need this person to get a job, and so now you also have to think about, you know, their triggers — it's just an added hurdle, but definitely one worth considering.

I always ask that people read the fine print on applications, though we would love for all companies to take that felony box off of applications, and many states and municipalities are doing that — we don't do that in Oklahoma — probably no surprise. And so we have to really teach and coach our participants — they need to read the fine print, because we don't want them to reveal information that they don't actually have to reveal, and each application is very different, and sometimes we'll only ask you for certain kind of charges to be revealed, sometimes only within a certain timeframe.

So they really need to read that carefully, and they also need to consider deferred and suspended sentences. A lot of employers are not going to know what these mean, and a deferred sentence is not technically a felony, and so we don't want them to, you know, divulge that they have a felony conviction if it's, in fact, deferred.

Okay, just — I wanted to touch quickly on the felony question. So, you know, you're in an interview and an employer says, you know, "Lisa, you marked that you have a felony and that you'd explain at interview. Can you please tell me about this?" We coach our participants to practice this question over and over and over and over again.



I will tell you that oftentimes I find — that — that this incident that occurred or multiple incidences that may have occurred that led the person to their conviction can be a very traumatic thing for them to retell. They can be very sorry, it can be a very sad story for them, and it can be a very hard story to retell, and some — so practicing this is super important.

And the reality is, they will have to explain this for the rest of their life, so if they can get a canned speech for how they're going to tell employers that they have a felony conviction, the better. And if they can practice with you, then that's great.

Now generally, when you hear their response, you'll know whether that's the correct thing for them to say or not. I mean, intrinsically, you'll just know if they're saying things they shouldn't say or not, but some helpful hints is for them to, first of all, 100% be honest. The Internet exists — we can look up anybody. And so, they don't want to hide or seem to be deceptive about hiding any of their charges.

They definitely want to keep it short and simple. They want to take responsibility. This may be difficult to someone who feels like they were unjustly convicted, but for the most part, there has to be something within their story that they can take responsibility for, and then they need to express remorse.

Those two items should be done in a sentence or two, two to three sentences, and then the bulk of the response should be spent on, "What am I doing moving forward in my life? Why is this job important to help me move on?" If someone's been sober for a





certain amount of time, they should certainly tell that to the employer.

For example, "I have a possessions charge. I spent — after a traumatic event in my family, I spent a couple of years living with an addiction. I have been in treatment for the last six months, and I have not used once since. I have a supportive group around me who's encouraging me to stay sober, and this job is a key to help me get back on the right track and support my family."

So that's just an example of how one might answer that felony question in an interview, and like I said, people really need to practice. Just one final note — you know, with women in particular, traditional female jobs or jobs that have been historically held by women or jobs that have responsibility over children, elderly, cash -- these type of things -- and those jobs are often immediately excluded when you have a felony conviction, and those are jobs that sometimes women can strive toward a livable wage.

Men, on the other hand, can often find jobs in manufacturing and general labor and get those higher dollar jobs right out of prison. And so for women, we do find it's a steeper climb. I would encourage women to look outside of what they've traditionally seen for themselves. You know, could they make it in — one of the — a job that is more traditionally considered a "male role" and encourage them to go after those manufacturing or general labor jobs even if it's pushing them outside of their comfort zone a little bit?



That's all I have. And so I will now pass it on to Reverend Vivian Nixon of the College and Community Fellowship.

Reverend Vivian Nixon:

Thank you so much. I'm very happy to be on this call. Thank you to the organizers and certainly to all of you who took time out of your busy schedule to attend this webinar. I'm Vivian Nixon, and I'm Executive Director of a small community-based program in New York City called College and Community Fellowship.

Our organization was founded in 2000 with the intent of helping women coming out of the criminal justice system earn college degrees and then move on to living wage employment that helped them to raise their families. So we have some pretty simple client engagement strategies that are the core of our work. Our work is based on the idea that developing a sense of community is really important, especially when working with women.

All of the resources that we have seen about gender responsive strategies within the criminal justice context, paying attention to trauma, paying attention to the different ways that women enter into the criminal justice system, point to the fact that — more than a set of rules and regulations and criteria — building healthy, stable relationships, and social networks is a process that works for women.

So our strategies include innovative recruitment, retention via inspiration, meaning we focus on their attributes and assets rather than on fixing their deficits. We keep their eyes on a goal or a prize, which is getting a college degree, and then ultimately, we end up with people successfully in the workforce, usually doing something that they always dreamed of doing with a credential



and with a social network that can help them throughout the rest of their lives.

So some of the milestones we've had in our program throughout the year — this year, we had 15 graduates, and that means that we reached the 300 mark, so since our founding in 2000, 300 women have earned college degrees. In New York State, the recidivism rate — is three — after three years is 44% for women. The College and Community Fellowship recidivism rate is about 2%.

It's probably less, but — we've — we round it up to account for the fact that we're measuring our recidivism rate over the entire period of our history and not just three years. Our core program focus areas include academic counseling, where a person comes into our program, they do an intake, they get a college readiness assessment, which is actually a document they can walk away with that tells them whether or not they're ready now to enroll in college or whether there are some steps they need to take first, and a very specific list of recommendations, what those steps might be, and — who can — who they can reach out to in order to proceed with those steps — our partners, such as the Fortune Society, The Bronx Offenders, the Legal Action Center, Green Hope Services for Women, the City University of New York, Hudson Link in-Prison College Program, and the Bard Prison Initiative help us work with students to get them ready to enroll in college.

Community meetings and activities are things that happen here in our offices on a regular basis, so during the month, there will be at least two or three opportunities for the women who are in our



program to come together to either do a Life Skills Workshop, to do our regular monthly community meeting, which is an exchange between students and alumni to, kind of, find people who are studying the same thing you're studying, to get study partners, to get tips and tools to share — we have a book exchange and other activities that go on at our community meetings.

We have a career development component that has not yet been formalized, because we're looking for funding that would allow us to do our career development the way we want to do it. We really want to focus on women coming out of the criminal justice system who have focused on education and maybe a part-time entry-level job for two or three years and then a really focus on building a career — not just getting a job.

We do financial coaching. We have learned that this population is extremely vulnerable when it comes to being approached by for-profit institutions who are encouraging them to sign student loan waivers and get involved in an educational process that may not be the most beneficial choice for them, so we do financial counseling around college loan debt, but we also do a basic financial education in terms of helping people understand banking, understand, you know, home ownership, understand saving for retirement. This is a deficit we find in this population over and over again, so we believe that financial literacy is extremely important.

We also believe in leadership development. I did mention earlier that our approach is strength-based, not deficit-based. So we help them to use the strength that they have to become leaders in this



small community of ours, which is formerly incarcerated women earning college degrees, but also in their home communities, in their churches, in their workplaces. How do you become a leader, what do those qualities look like, and how do you exude that? It goes a little bit beyond soft skills to really nurturing a person's internal leadership ambition.

We have tutoring and peer mentoring, so some of our tutoring is subject-specific. We know that in college, a lot of people struggle with the math courses, some struggle with writing, and so we provide tutors when necessary.

And we currently have a Second Chance mentoring grant, which allows us to go into women's correctional facilities here in New York State 90 days pre-release, find students who have already exhibited an interest in furthering their education, usually by attending one of the in-prison college programs we have here in New York, and make sure that they get connected to educational opportunities on the outside.

Okay, Brent talked about this earlier, so I won't go into a whole lot of the pathways that our women have taken into the criminal justice system, but we do know about the tremendous growth of women in criminal justice — that most of these women have emotional issues, physical and sexual abuse histories, and that runaways account for a large percent of the women who end up in prison.

So — our innovative recruitment strategies I want to talk about for a minute — so a lot of times, I see organizations out recruiting, and their materials are there, and people are very



interested in learning about other organizations, but it's mostly other professionals learning about other professionals. We find the way to actually engage women who might have a criminal record and want to aspire to go to college is to use our alumna.

In this picture that you see here is a group of our alumna that do drama-based recruiting. So we go to Rikers Island, we go to other programs that serve this population, and we do performances of our life stories and how we got connected to the educational process. It's entertaining, but it also appeals to a lot of young women and adult women who are looking for a way to take the next step beyond a minimum wage job.

This is another picture of the theater group doing a recruitment activity — same thing here. We actually incorporate some of their children into our work, because we believe in a two-generational strategy, which I'll talk about later. So our staff is nearly 2/3<sup>rd</sup>'s people who have been directly been impacted by incarceration, so one of the other ways we are able retain students alone — we have an 82% retention rate.

The reason we are able to retain our students is because they see themselves in the staff here and also when they interact with our alumni. They see what's possible for their lives. And so we believe in retaining by inspiration, not by punishment. A lot of programs that I've come across have a list of rules — which, we do have rules — I don't want to give you the impression that we don't — but they're — the consequences of not obeying the rules or, you know, could be expulsion from the program, and so under the threat of expulsion, people will behave — that's the theory.



We find that we don't even have to focus on the rules that much when we inspire people to be their best self.

This is just a moment of inspiration. It's one of my favorite moments of inspiration. I always try to bring the voices of the women we serve into the conversation. This is a woman — who got a — who won a special scholarship from us last year, and she was just overjoyed that we would consider her academic pursuits worthy of a scholarship, and just the joy on her face — it's — that reward did more than any punishment could have ever done.

Eyes on the prize — we keep graduation at the forefront, you know. Students come in to us — sometimes they're tired, they're working part-time, or they have a sick parent at home. They're taking care of kids, and they're like, "Look I can't do school again this semester." Sometimes we do recommend people take a break, but we find that we hold up that prize in front of them, this college degree and all that means in American society in terms of the amount of money you can earn over a lifetime, the example you're setting for your children. When we keep their eyes on the prize, people graduate.

Another prize that we keep before them is, we don't only do direct services here. We very much advocate for our students to have everything that they have a right to have. Here in New York State, we have very strong discrimination laws when it comes to employing people with felony convictions, and in New York City, specifically, our Division of Human Rights does go after employers who discriminate against people based solely on a criminal conviction.



So in New York State, you cannot say to a person, "I'm not hiring you because of your criminal conviction." The conviction has to be relevant to the job — it has to be — you have to consider the length of time that the person has been doing productive things. There are several considerations that have to be made before an employer refuses a job to an otherwise qualified individual with a felony record.

So we have advocacy opportunities for our students. So we go to Albany, we go other places to educate employers, educators, educate lawmakers about what this population really needs and how much they really do want to be successfully reintegrated into society, but there are statutes and collateral consequences that sometimes make that difficult, so rather than just complain about that, we encourage our students to be civically engaged in changing the structural barriers that are preventing them from success.

That also changes — their frame — their framework about who they are and what their power is to change the world. Also gives them self-confidence, and we find that people would rather be positive change makers than criminals, and once they're able to see themselves as something positive, they usually don't go back.

So we know that there are institutional barriers to employment, which I just mentioned. Between 1/3 and 2/3 of the incarcerated reported income of less than \$1,000 in the month prior to their arrest, so employment was probably a barrier before they ever went to prison. I think that's a point we fail to make — that these





were not largely people who were successful in their careers before prison. They've always had problems with employment.

Industries most willing to hire formerly incarcerated people are those that require little customer contact like manufacturing, construction, transportation, and as the last speaker mentioned, these are traditionally more for men than women, although there are some innovative programs here in New York that are putting women in nontraditional jobs.

Many of those with criminal justice histories face employment discrimination, regardless of whether the former offense would impact job performance or safety, and in New York State, once again, that is not what the law requires. I wanted to say a moment about the fact that we approach our work from a multigenerational strategy. This is just a visual picture of how many of the women we have at our program who have children — 75% have children.

Many of them are single or divorced or separated, and because of that, we feel we need to also support, in some way, their children's advancement towards academic success or a career in their future, so we are now providing space for their children to come to our monthly community meetings and other workshops and do an activity that is related directly to them, and in the future, we're going to be doing some train-to-trainer work so that moms know how to navigate the late stages of high school moving into college, so that they know how to navigate all those application processes, school choice, helping find the funding for their kids to go to school — that's also very important to us that we keep a multigenerational framework.



So this slide talks about how we incorporate our multigenerational framework into our work. We motivate and inspire both parents and children, we share college knowledge with both parents and children, we do cross-generational mentoring, and we hold parents and children mutually accountable for whatever academic activity they're involved in at the time.

So how do we support people into college, through college, and then eventually into a career? By engaging and empowering the students, developing a college goal and identity rather than a criminal or ex-con, ex-felon, ex-offender identity, helping them with entry admissions and financial support, building the program's relationships, and developing a network community to scaffold resistance — that's building up social networks. All the people you meet while you are in school, the professors you meet in school, the mentors and volunteers you meet in our program, the professionals you meet in other programs — all of these are social networks that you are building that can scaffold your success in the future.

To enlist this to further education and/or employment and influencing multilevel process and cultural change, which is our policy work. That is not just about these individual women, but it's about examining the environment we're in and think that we can change to make things better for them and their families.

College plus community for us is all about building social capital. When you see very successful people in the world, they often talk about the folks they met along the way in their hometowns, in their communities, on their jobs, in their schools that have helped



them build up this vast social capital that keeps them moving forward.

So small interventions do make a big difference. This is more scholarships being received. This is our annual graduation ceremony. And I wanted to leave you with words from some of our students, because I think their voices are extremely important.

This is Victoria — Victoria became involved in CCS in 2007. She earned her Master's degree six years later in Social Work from Adelphi University. A legal assistant by trade, she works for a prominent Civil Rights attorney now. Victoria has been highlighted in our newsletter many times for her academic excellence, advocacy work, and overall achievements with her community.

She has also been invited to present at our community meetings, monthly networking and information sessions, and at College Access workshops. Due to her commitment to education, Victoria received a fellowship which afforded her the opportunity to study abroad at Stockholm University in Sweden. And she states in her own words, "It is my sincere desire to show the world that there are many formerly incarcerated women who are willing to work hard to maintain their freedom and in the process change the lives of those around them."

And I think I have time for one more — Felicia. Felicia is CCF's first graduated lawyer. She became involved in CCF during her first semester of law school in 2010 after a release from federal prison. Since that time, she has volunteered in many of our



activities, especially our advocacy campaigns to eliminate barriers to higher education facing individuals with criminal records.

She was our valedictorian in 2013. She's modest, but she plans to use her law degree to fight discrimination against people with criminal records.

Our Alumni Association is composed of women like Felicia and Victoria. They are very active, and they are the main inspiration for new students coming into our program who may not already have been successful at college but want to give it a try this time.

Again, we have an 82% retention rate, a 70% graduation rate. It exceeds every graduation rate in every community college in the State of New York, so we believe that our community and network building approach is the right approach for these women. Thank you for your time.

Lisa Washington-Thomas: Thank you so much Brent, Julie, Kelly, and Reverend Nixon.

We have one more polling question that we would like to ask you, and then we'll move to the questions and answers. "What federal technical assistance would be most helpful to you in understanding and implementing new approaches related to effective employment and support strategies for women with criminal records?"

I'll read that one more time. "What federal technical assistance would be most helpful to you in understanding and implementing new approaches related to effective employment and support strategies for women with criminal records?"



Well, it's very close, but many are saying that you would like more written products — okay. So we're moving to our facilitated virtual question-and-answer, and I'm going to turn this over to my colleague, Damon Waters, who is a Program Specialist in the Office of Family Assistance.

Damon Waters:

Thanks Lisa. We have a couple of questions for our presenters today. Our first question had to do with the amount of time that individuals remain employed in the different programs that are presented today, so if you could give a sense of how long individuals stay employed after they participate in your program.

Kelly Doyle:

This is Kelly with CEO, and our current retention rates for 180 days are 54%, and for 365, it's 45% for the most high-risk to recidivate individuals.

Damon Waters:

Anyone else?

Reverend Vivian Nixon:

We do annual surveys three years out, so this year, we surveyed our 2012 graduates, and so forth and so on. In compiling all of the data, each cohort has stayed in — 80% of each cohort has stayed employed since the time of graduation, and 100% of them are earning more money than they, of course, earned before they got a college degree — those are the two numbers we ask about.

Julie Scrapchansky:

Hi, this is Julie. As far as for STRIDE, we have — our annual deliverables that are mandated through — for retention purposes — so we base it on all five facilities that we're in, so — as far as — as far as the women presented, it's 77%, so based — and that's based on a year of employment, and we typically follow our participants for a year or as long as they need us, but definitively a



year, and they graduate successfully after a year of employment — but three months for retention purposes for the Department of Labor.

Damon Waters:

Thank you. “What types of suggestions are given to participants to help them answer interview questions and successfully prepare for interviews with — for those with criminal records?”

Julie Scrapchansky:

You said what type of questions?

Damon Waters:

“What types of suggestions are given to participants to help them answer interview questions and prepare for interviews?”

Julie Scrapchansky:

Well, we ask that they go through a list of just very standard interview questions and write their responses far in advance of any interview, because an interview can bring on a lot of nerves, and people will often forget maybe they were going to say so it's always about preparation, and the folks that I work with are going into very simple interviews, and so they don't need to be very, you know, abstract questions — just very simple ones and practice.

Kelly Doyle:

Yes, absolutely, the practice I would say is imperative, and to make sure that they understand what they're going to be saying and what needs to be said properly, so doing that — it — for STRIDE, we pre-release — we work with them for five to seven weeks on just preparing themselves for that interview when they get outside, so I think exercises are critical to, you know, their attainment.

Damon Waters:

Vivian, did you have anything that you wanted to add?



Reverend Vivian Nixon: No, I have nothing to add. I agree — practice is key. Each individual circumstance is important, and also, the state that you're in matters, because in New York, there's certain things that can't be asked.

Damon Waters: Thank you. We have a question from a job coach and job manager — case manager from some programs. "Based on experience, what are some tips or suggestions for maintaining and/or increasing motivation for women who become frustrated with their job search, and are there any resources available to assist workers in helping those individuals?"

Kelly Doyle: At CEO, we utilize motivational interviewing, so it's really getting to the heart of what is motivating the women that you're working with, which is, you can figure that out with a lot of reflective or with a lot of active listening and reflective statements, and each person is going to be different, and so, determining what it is that's motivating them, whether it's not going back to prison, whether it's their kids, their parents — using that to help motivate them is going to be key.

Reverend Vivian Nixon: Yes, I would say the same exact thing. We have more questions about keeping people in school than work, because most of our students are resigned to working whatever part-time job or minimum wage job they have now until they graduate, so the thing we hold that as that motivational factor is getting that college degree and where it's going to take you in terms of your earning potential.

Julie Scrapchansky: No, I agree, I think motivation is critical. Without the motivation and the actual support in the community in getting them to



develop the goals that they are, you know, striving for — I think that is really important. Having some incentives for the women— with them — and they're working, and they can reach a three-month marker.

I know we'll provide a Walmart gift card for them too. So I think just the actual motivation and being a part of what they need in the community, and having someone to speak to on anytime they can is critical.

Damon Waters: Thank you. Oh, go ahead.

Julie Scrapchansky: Oh, no, I was just going to, you know, further say, just by mentoring them and coaching them and just being there.

Damon Waters: Thank you. If any of our presenters on the line can offer some suggestions for service providers who live in high cost of living areas, where locating long-term affordable housing is difficult? Any suggestions if you may have would be appreciated.

Reverend Vivian Nixon: Well, New York State recently — a— New York City Housing Authority recently started a pilot project. We know that many states took the federal HUD guidance about people returning to public housing with felony convictions to, you know, various levels, depending on the state. And what we're doing here in New York City is that the New York City Housing Authority is doing a pilot project — pilot program, where they say, "You know what? These are people's families, they're coming home, they need a place to come home to — let's do an experiment where we allow that to happen, and see if there's any impact on public safety in the public housing areas."





Because when it was taken — when the right to go back to public housing was taken away, it wasn't based on any real research that prove that when people come home from prison to public housing it has an impact on public safety in those developments.

So I think that other states can do the same thing like, let's look at some of the policies that are preventing people from getting into what little affordable housing is there.

Julie Scrapchansky:

Yes, here in Connecticut too, I think there is a significant housing concern, but under Governor Malloy's Second Chance Society Act, they are looking into improving those concerns for housing because there is such a need for it.

Damon Waters:

Thank you. And to all of the presenters, there have been a number of questions about receiving some of the resources, some of the curricula, and some of the things that were discussed on here, and I'm sure those will be made available to the PeerTA Network. We'll share them in a follow-up email.

Julie Scrapchansky:

Sure.

Damon Waters:

Great, thank you. “Have you all considered opening a center in Alabama, since the female prison population has increased dramatically, and increased harsh sentencing has affected women more than men, or partnering with programs in Alabama?”

Kelly Doyle:

I know with regard to CEO, we're in the states that we're currently in because of invitation from local government, and so if there was interest from government for Center for Employment Opportunities to be there, we would certainly look into it.



Somebody had asked about what city we're in in Pennsylvania, and we will be in Philadelphia.

Damon Waters: “Where does the funding come from to employ the program participants’ training costs and the wages if they're supported not through private or regular employers?”

Julie Scrapchansky: We receive — the work that we do with public sector partners provides earned income, so our public sector partners, like, the local community college, our local cities that employ our work crews provide about 80% -- anywhere from 60% to 80% of the funding that it costs to run the crews — and then we have to fundraise for the remaining private philanthropy grants — all the usual suspects.

Damon Waters: “How do felony offenders pay for their tuition if they were not eligible for federal financial aid?”

Reverend Vivian Nixon: So they are eligible for federal financial aid upon release. The only time they're not eligible for federal financial aid is while they're currently incarcerated, and actually, that happened in 1994 through the Crime Bill, and we just heard former President Clinton in a speech last week say that if he could undo that, he would.

Damon Waters: Okay. Anyone else? Okay. “How are the programs that presented today having their inmates to approach the questions concerning their background — should they bring up their convictions and their records?”

Julie Scrapchansky: Whether they should bring it up themselves?



- Damon Waters: Yes, how should they approach — being — when they're asked about that?
- Kelly Doyle: Well, I mentioned some of it in my presentation, and they'll be in the slides that are distributed, but I would not ask until asked, simply, and I would be honest and truthful and remorseful and genuine.
- Julie Scrapchansky: Yes, I think it's fully important — this — we go by, ask them what their three "R's" — like the 3 "R's" — Responsibility, Regret, and Repair. So, take responsibility for what you've done, at least show regret, and then repair of how you're moving forward. But all of this, too, will be in the presentation and slide points that we can send out.
- Reverend Vivian Nixon: I would agree with that, but I would also add to do all of those things, while giving as little detail as possible. I don't think people should — are required to go in and tell a gory narrative of their lives. I think that can be more damaging.
- Julie Scrapchansky: Absolutely.
- Reverend Vivian Nixon: But to take responsibility, to show remorse, to be forthcoming without a whole lot of detail is what we recommend.
- Damon Waters: Thank you. One of our participants is wondering, "if anyone had any programs that deal specifically with women who not only have criminal records, but also substance abuse issues."
- Reverend Vivian Nixon: We don't deal specifically with that population — this is Vivian Nixon — but over 80% of the women who come to us have some drug abuse history.



Damon Waters: “Are there any particular services or activities that you coordinate for those individuals?”

Reverend Vivian Nixon: We have partner organizations who specialize in substance abuse treatment, and so we offer that service, but we also have our counselors trained to look out for signs of possible relapse, because we know that that is a problem, and we address it head on. We have a social worker on staff that we refer people to when we see issues coming up.

Damon Waters: Thank you Vivian. Anyone else? Another question we received, "What kind of things do you do to assist clients who do not have transportation?"

Julie Scrapchansky: Well, we provide 30 one-day bus passes for all of our clients coming out into the communities, so that helps them at least for the first 30 days, in order to go out and try to, you know, find employment or reunite with their families, so that's something that we offer.

Reverend Vivian Nixon: We provide metro cards as well.

Damon Waters: Another question that came in, "Why the wage difference for the starting wage?" And I think that was CEO had mentioned that the starting wage for males and females differed. Was there a particular reason for that difference or just the local economy?

Julie Scrapchansky: I think that we've had a greater success at finding — so our average wage for men is \$9.21 and \$9 — and, I'm sorry, \$8.13 for females, and I think that goes to the point where a lot of historically male-dominated industries are paying at a higher rate than some of the industries that women are able to access, and we



certainly have women that do very well in some of those male-dominated industries, but it can be a bit more challenging.

Damon Waters:

And one question, "I was wondering — for the programs — where do you find enough funding for such ambitious programs?"

Julie Scrapchansky:

Well, our program is completely funded through the Department of Labor so, you know, we operate on a biennium budget and we do a lot of — yes, we — it's all state money from the DOL, and we go out and we speak to the legislators, and our participants will come in, and we'll do, like, "Meet and Greets" at the Capitol to get people to come in to talk about the program and the benefits that's happened to — with them, so we've been fortunate enough to be in existence — we're going on 16 years.

Reverend Vivian Nixon:

College and Community Fellowships are mostly privately funded. We had one Second Chance grant which is the — our mentoring component that we do 90 days pre-release.

Kelly Doyle:

And we're — we have a CDBG grant that's somewhat small, and the remainder of our funds is all privately fundraised outside of our earned income. We go to corporations, we go to private family foundations and try to piece it all together every year — United Way.

Damon Waters:

And one last question before I turn it back over to Lisa Washington-Thomas is, "What suggestions do you have for any medical concerns regarding keeping people healthy after incarceration? Do you provide access — ?"



- Kelly Doyle: We have resources that we send folks. We actually have a clinic here that can help individuals for free within the first year of release. That tends to be where we send people in need of care.
- Reverend Vivian Nixon: And we have a health education program — a very small program with a little bit of funding from the Office of Women's Health — and we partner with Saint Luke's Coming Home program at a local hospital here. It is a very similar program. They'll treat anyone coming out for free for a year.
- Julie Scrapchansky: Same here in Connecticut. We reach out to emergency medical — either mental health or medical providers on 24 hour care if needed and referrals into the community.
- Damon Waters: Thank you. And actually one more question popped in — two more: "Do any of the programs work with individuals who were trafficked for labor or commercial sex? Anyone work with victims of human trafficking activities?"
- Julie Scrapchansky: No. I...
- Kelly Doyle: Not to my knowledge.
- Reverend Vivian Nixon: Yes, not exclusively, but that is a huge part of the female prison population and not always disclosed and not always labeled as "trafficking."
- Damon Waters: Thank you. And this will actually be our last question here. And this is actually a question for Vivian, but the others can chime in if you wish. "Can you confirm that a felony drug conviction is an automatic disqualifier for federal financial aid?"



Reverend Vivian Nixon: It is not. And I'm so glad someone asked. If someone has a felony drug conviction that they were arrested for while receiving financial aid, they are then barred for a period of time from receiving additional aid, but even then with some documented drug treatment programs, you can get back in the good graces with the Department of Education and reapply.

Damon Waters: Thank you. And thank you to our presenters. I'll turn it back over to Lisa Washington-Thomas.

Lisa Washington-Thomas: Thanks Damon, I was on mute. Thanks Damon and I want to thank again Brent, Julie, Kelly, and Reverend Nixon. You gave us some very useful information on comprehensive programs that, even though I sat in on the dry run, I learned so much more information about your two-generational approaches, your successes, working pre- and post- release, and — the — your successes in getting our returning citizens jobs and helping them to retain them and very useful information regarding the interview process and how to address — those — that subject of their criminal history — so thank you very much.

I learned a lot, and I'm sure our audience did too. And to our audience, thank you so much for participating, for responding to our poll questions. We're going to — I also want to — please remember to provide us feedback on this webinar using the survey that will appear in the pop up window when the webinar ends.

A transcript and audio recording of this webinar will be available shortly on the PeerTA Network, which is at

<https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov>. Again, that's <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov>.



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We look forward to your participation on future webinars through the PeerTA network, and thank you very much. Have a good afternoon. Bye bye.

Operator:

Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude the conference call for today. We thank you for your patience and ask that you please disconnect your lines. Have a good day everybody.

END