

August 24, 2016

Senator Alberta Darling  
Representative Rob Hutton  
Wisconsin State Capitol  
2 East Main Street  
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Chairperson Darling and Vice-Chairperson Hutton:

In response to the Legislative Council Study Committee on Reducing Recidivism and Removing Impediments to Ex-Offender Employment, please see background information to assist with the report to the Legislative Council Study Committee Members:

**What incentives does DWD offer to employers to hire ex-offenders:**

- Fidelity Bonding Program: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/bonding/default.htm>
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/jobservice/taxcredit/wotc.htm>

**How does DWD educate employers about those incentives:**

As part of our local Job Center Business Service team structure, our business representatives meet with employers to discuss the services available through the One-Stop system, including incentive programs such as Fidelity Bonding and the WOTC program.

Throughout the year, we have booths at a variety of employer related events to remind employers of services/programs operated/available through the Job Center.

At times, we have done mailings to employers to announce events, share new features/services, etc. We often coordinate with DWD's Division of Unemployment Insurance to also use their employer mailings as a way to provide additional information.

For our employers using the JobCenterofWisconsin.com system, we also have the ability to do no-cost email blasts to inform employers on topics of interest.

**What types of incentives are other states offering to employers to hire ex-offenders:**

The following are links for reentry information/initiatives for five of our Midwestern states. States have a variety of tools in place to address reentry initiatives. Many are things done in Wisconsin as well, but it would be advisable for a study group to research some of these initiatives. Within our Division, we do have contacts in our ten state Midwest region, if there is a desire to have conversations with them to understand their reentry strategies in more detail. All states would use the WOTC program as one incentive to employers to hire ex-felons.

State of Iowa: <http://www.doc.state.ia.us/OffenderReentry>

State of Illinois: <https://exoffenders.net/reentry-programs-assistance/illinois/>

State of Minnesota: <http://www.doc.state.mn.us/pages/index.php/about/reports-and-publications/publications/reentry/>

State of Michigan: <https://exoffenders.net/reentry-programs-assistance/michigan/>

State of Ohio: <http://www.drc.ohio.gov/web/offenderreentry.htm>

### **What programs does DWD offer to inmates and ex-offenders:**

We offer a variety of programs/services to both inmates and ex-offenders. For inmates, there is a lot of work being done right now between DOC and DWD/DET to have inmates conduct a variety of career assessments, while still incarcerated, to better identify career goals, aptitudes, better awareness of labor market conditions, etc. With IT coordination, information will be shared with DWD/DET to populate our client reporting information on this population. This will help with targeting resources for better program coordination, employment plan development, targeted marketing/outreach. Additionally, both Job Center staff and Veteran Services staff do go into prisons to do workshops, establish case management relationships, etc.

For ex-offenders, workshops and staff assistance are offered at the Job Centers. These customers are advised of all the programs we offer to potentially assist them with their employment and training needs, including the WIOA program, Veteran programs, Counseling offerings, Vocational rehabilitation, etc.

### **How does DWD educate inmates about those programs:**

Information is provided when staff do outreach at prisons. We have also made information available to DOC to share with inmates. We have had long standing IT solutions between DOC and DWD so inmates could get a secure view of some JCW information.

### **When will the next large scale business survey of employers across the state be conducted? Please ask employers "What are the biggest barriers to employing ex-offenders":**

We have not established the survey yet, but anticipate doing a survey in the fall of 2016. This survey will include questions specifically tailored to reentry initiatives/hiring of ex-felons.

### **How many private sector employers are hiring ex-offenders:**

We do not have this information as employers do not report on this. We can't get this information through current UI wage data reporting, since this status isn't captured on a UI claim. Because of WIOA, we are adding more fields to our client reporting tool to capture ex-felon status, but this will still be optional for the person to provide the information.

However, we can provide the following data for the Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit program (WOTC). The following is ex-felon WOTC certification information for the last four quarters. For every certification, that is the result of an employer doing a hire.

- Quarter ending 9/30/15: 377 people
- Quarter ending 12/31/15: 340 people
- Quarter ending 3/31/16: 424 people
- Quarter ending 6/30/16: 517 people

### **How many people in DWD programs are ex-offenders:**

As part of active participants in our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult and Youth programs, for the time frame of 1/1/16-7/31/16, 159 out of the 607 Adult participants had self-reported 'yes' to the offender status question. That represents 21%; 50 out of the 350 youth participants had answered yes, or 12.5%. As mentioned above, this information isn't currently captured for all programs, and if it is captured, it's still voluntarily provided.

For purposes of enrollment into some of our federal programs, including WIOA, ex-offender status is one that would make them eligible for these programs.

As part of our Federal WIOA program implementation, we are now specifically required to have a field in our client reporting system called 'ex-offender' for customers to provide this information, but is still optional, and we are required to allow the person to not disclose that information.

**Can you identify ex-offender friendly employers:**

We haven't been tracking this information this way statewide. However, with the Salesforce tool that our business services representatives are now using, an entry field has been added to allow business representatives to indicate if an employer is willing/interested in hiring ex-offenders, so overtime, we will start building a better database of this.

Sincerely,



Georgia E. Maxwell  
Deputy Secretary

