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JUSTICE PROGRAMS OFFICE

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE (BJA) DRUG COURT
CLEARINGHOUSE/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS SERIES: Developing Partnerships with Employers to
Employ Drug Court Participants**

Subject: Developing Partnerships with Employers to Employ Drug Court Participants
From: BJA Drug Court Clearinghouse/Technical Assistance Project
Date: April 16, 2013

We have received inquiries from several drug court programs regarding strategies other drug courts have used to develop partnerships with employers to hire drug court participants. We would appreciate receiving information on the experiences of drug courts in developing employment opportunities for participants, and, specifically, the following:

Questions

- (1) Does your drug court program have an employment assistance component? If so, please describe the services it provides (e.g. job readiness services, application/resume assistance, job placements, etc.) and at what point in the program participants access these services (e.g. at the start?, after being drug free for X days?, etc.).
- (2) Does your program make any formal outreach to employers to solicit their willingness to employ drug court participants? (e.g. communications with the chamber of commerce?, other businesses or community groups?) If so, please describe.
- (3) Does your program access any special resources to promote employment of persons convicted of felony offenses (e.g. the Federal Bonding Program (<http://jobsforfelonsz.com>), etc.)?
- (4) When employers employ a drug court participant, does the program maintain any contact with the employer regarding the participant's job performance?
- (5) Do you have any advice for programs wanting to institute some type of services that will promote employment of program participants?

To date, responses to this inquiry have been received from six programs, five adult, and one juvenile program, across six states, including Colorado, Hawaii, Montana, Oregon, Texas and Virginia. Of the programs that responded, the majority of them do not have specific employment assistance components set up, but do offer participants help with job skills, job search, and referral. One program in Richmond, Virginia requires unemployed participants to attend an eight week employment group which includes the three previously listed services. Two other programs list alternate requirements if the participant is unemployed or cannot find a job, including furthering education or performing community service. The majority of the programs noted requirements of checking in periodically with participants' known employers to inquire about his or her work performance.

None of the respondents report currently accessing any special resources to promote employment of persons convicted of felony offenses. Additionally, no formal outreach to the chamber of commerce has been made by any of the respondents, but a few collect and maintain a list, based on past placement experiences, referrals from local agencies and both present and alumni drug court participants, of employers that are receptive to hiring felony probationers.

At this time the greatest advice from the responding programs is to reach out, network, and maintain contact within the community. This networking includes speaking with present and past program participants.

RESPONSES

COLORADO

Darrell Clah
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- 1) *Does your drug court program have an employment assistance component? If so, please describe the services it provides (e.g. job readiness services, application/resume assistance, job placements, etc.) and at what point in the program participants access these services (e.g., at the start? after being drug free for X days?, etc.).*

For our program as well as regular probation we utilize the Tribe's Vocation Rehabilitation program, Human Resource Department, and TERO to help probationers/participants seek job skills, obtain job related needs, and seek employment. We also have access to the Tribe's Higher Education Department and area GED programs if more education is needed for employment. If a client is not able to obtain employment at the time we will allow them to further their education during supervision. They would begin this process as soon as they enter in the program.

- 2) *Does your program make any formal outreach to employers to solicit their willingness to employ drug court participants? (e.g. communications with the chamber of commerce?, other businesses or community groups?) If so, please describe.*

We contact these agencies as soon as the participant enters the program.

- 3) *Does your program access any special resources to promote employment of persons convicted of felony offenses (e.g. the Federal Bonding Program (<http://jobsforfelonsz.com>), etc.)?*

There hasn't been a need through Tribal entities, but we would have to if we were outside of this organization.

- 4) *When employers employ a drug court participant, does the program maintain any contact with the employer regarding the participant's job performance?*

We check in with employers weekly.

- 5) *Do you have any advice for programs wanting to institute some type of services that will promote employment of program participants?*

We are set up nicely since the Southern Ute Indian Tribe is probably the largest employer in the area and are proactive in helping their members becoming employed. But I believe the same could be accomplished with communities' employment agencies, workforces, GED providers, transitional services, and other non-profits that focus on aiding in this area for offenders to become better citizens. I have little knowledge about the Second Chance Act grant, since we haven't applied for it, but believe it offers employee assistance, etc. to aid in employment for offenders.

HAWAII

Hon. Ronald Ibarra
Chief Judge
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We contact the employment agency and the temporary agency to inform them of our clients being potential employees. Once they are hired the probation officer periodically meets with the employers and checks on the participants' performances. At the review hearings I (judge) ask the participants about work. I ask if they were disciplined, counseled, promoted or whether they were late or absent from work.

During "Drug Court Month" in May we invite the employers and present them with certificates of appreciation for supporting drug court.

MONTANA

Darrin Moser
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See answers below for the Montana 7th Judicial Adult Drug Court.

- 1) *Does your drug court program have an employment assistance component? If so, please describe the services it provides (e.g. job readiness services, application/resume assistance, job placements, etc.) and at what point in the program participants access these services (e.g., at the start? after being drug free for X days?, etc.).*

We require the participants to find a job. They will use resources at Job Service. There are not any specific programs that we have. If they are unable to find a job, they will be required to come to the coordinator's office and perform community service type duties until they find a job. So far we have not had any one perform duties as they find a job before reaching that.

- 2) *Does your program make any formal outreach to employers to solicit their willingness to employ drug court participants? (e.g. communications with the chamber of commerce?, other businesses or community groups?) If so, please describe.*

No we do not.

- 3) *Does your program access any special resources to promote employment of persons convicted of felony offenses (e.g. the Federal Bonding Program (<http://jobsforfelonsz.com>), etc.)?*

No we do not.

- 4) *When employers employ a drug court participant, does the program maintain any contact with the employer regarding the participant's job performance?*

We do work checks if they are in the area. If we hear anything about any issues with participants at their employment, the coordinator or probation officer will be in contact with them to see what is going on.

- 5) *Do you have any advice for programs wanting to institute some type of services that will promote employment of program participants?*

None at this time.

OREGON

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See responses below for our juvenile drug court program in Washington County.

- 1) *Does your drug court program have an employment assistance component? If so, please describe the services it provides (e.g., job readiness services, application/resume assistance, job placements, etc.) and at what point in the program participants access these services (e.g., at the start? after being drug free for X days?, etc.).*

Nothing formal, but we assist clients who are interested in finding a job with basic job hunting skills in some cases. For example, we have met with them to teach basic job hunting process skills and then driven them to some of the businesses to pick up applications and practice what we taught them.

We do this when a youth both 1) expresses motivation in getting a job and 2) when they express a willingness to have support in finding a job from the drug court team.

- 2) *Does your program make any formal outreach to employers to solicit their willingness to employ drug court participants? (e.g., communications with the chamber of commerce? other businesses or community groups?) If so, please describe.*

No.

- 3) *Does your program access any special resources to promote employment of persons convicted of felony offenses (e.g. the Federal Bonding Program (<http://jobsforfelonsz.com>), etc.)?*

No.

- 4) *When employers employ a drug court participant, does the program maintain any contact with the employer regarding the participant's job performance?*

No.

- 5) *Do you have any advice for programs wanting to institute some type of services that will promote employment of program participants?*

No.

TEXAS

Hon. Ernie L. Glenn
Judge
Bexar County Felony Drug Court
San Antonio, TX
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- 1) *Does your drug court program have an employment assistance component? If so, please describe the services it provides (e.g. job readiness services, application/resume assistance, job placements, etc.) and at what point in the program participants access these services (e.g., at the start? after being drug free for X days?, etc.).*

Our case managers help with job referrals, resumes, and applications. We have done job readiness/interviewing skills workshops in the past, but we have referral sources that can provide those services due to time constraints.

- 2) *Does your program make any formal outreach to employers to solicit their willingness to employ drug court participants? (e.g., communications with the chamber of commerce? other businesses or community groups?) If so, please describe.*

Our case managers contact employers and have collected a list of those that are friendly to felony probationers based on past experience and referrals we have gotten from our local Alamo Work Source agency. One of our best sources of employment is drawn from our alumni and present participants that are in management with various employers. Early on, the Work Source referrals were our best source and, additionally, they are very good at keeping up with local job fairs and sponsor several of those each year themselves.

- 3) *Does your program access any special resources to promote employment of persons convicted of felony offenses (e.g. the Federal Bonding Program (<http://jobsforfelonsz.com>), etc.)?*

We do encourage our participants to attend job fairs co-sponsored by federal probation and Texas Work Source along with other partners.

- 4) *When employers employ a drug court participant, does the program maintain any contact with the employer regarding the participant's job performance?*

Yes, we do maintain contact with employers and encourage them to inform us as to progress of our participants as employees. We use that information to encourage our people to be diligent and reliable in order to build a work history and resume.

- 5) *Do you have any advice for programs wanting to institute some type of services that will promote employment of program participants?*

It helps to partner up with local agencies that help find employment opportunities and to then make employment and/or continuing education a program requirement. Making sure the participants know this will be enforced at their court reviews so they are more likely to follow through with the referrals.

We have a number of sources of job referrals in San Antonio due to the size of our population, so we are pretty lucky in that respect. However, when all your participants are on felony probation, it is essential to make a list of those that you learn will hire them and weed out those who won't.

VIRGINIA

Stanley N. Morris

Advocate

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- 1) *Does your drug court program have an employment assistance component? If so, please describe the services it provides (e.g. job readiness services, application/resume assistance, job placements, etc.) and at what point in the program participants access these services (e.g. at the start?, after being drug free for X days?, etc.).*

The Richmond Adult Drug Treatment Court Program has an employment assistance component that assists clients with the basics to become employable. All new clients who are unemployed must attend the eight week employment group which meets every Wednesday from 9 to 10:30 AM. In this group we complete a sample application, and review the following topics: "how to conduct an effect job search," "first impressions," "overcoming the challenges of employment," "handling the stress of the job search," and "keeping your job."

- 2) *Does your program make any formal outreach to employers to solicit their willingness to employ drug court participants? (e.g. communications with the chamber of commerce?, other businesses or community groups?) If so, please describe.*

We attempt to make formal outreach to employers who are known to employ individuals with felony convictions. We also network with the local community outreach centers (i.e. The Virginia Employment Commission Office).

- 3) *Does your program access any special resources to promote employment of persons convicted of felony offenses (e.g. the Federal Bonding Program (<http://jobsforfelonsz.com>), etc.)?*

We have not yet accessed any special resources (e.g. the Federal Bonding Program), as we have not received any statistics on its success.

- 4) *When employers employ a drug court participant, does the program maintain any contact with the employer regarding the participant's job performance?*

Yes, drug court will maintain contact with the employer regarding the participant's performance to ensure compliance and try to maintain a good work relationship which will allow others participants an opportunity at employment.

- 5) *Do you have any advice for programs wanting to institute some type of services that will promote employment of program participants?*

A consistent effort from staff networking. It also helps to sometimes take clients to job fairs and other places of employment in the community to do job searches. Also, welcome employers to your facility to talk to participants about employment and what they look for from applicants.

We welcome any additional information and/or perspective readers may have on this topic.

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