

Indiana DOC and ARAMARK Cook Up Reentry Success

By Edwin G. Buss and Timothy Campbell

If an ex-offender had not pulled him from the wreckage of a car crash, Randy Focken would never have pursued a criminal justice career focused on probation, parole and reentry. It is Focken's way of thanking the man who had been in and out of jail so many times he knew exactly where a state trooper lived — and was able to get him to help save Focken's life.

Because of this man's immediate actions, Focken is directing IN2WORK, an innovative inmate vocational training program offered at nearly 70 correctional facilities across the country, 21 of them within the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC).

It is not possible to know if reentry preparation would have helped the good Samaritan, but it is probable he received little to none. Reentry is tough, and successful reintegration into the community is harder still. That is why IDOC and ARAMARK Correctional Services have teamed up to provide culinary training with formal certification, which, among its many benefits, helps individuals return to society and successfully stay there.

Ex-offenders face many challenges upon their release. They carry the stigma of having been incarcerated and have to deal with the same issues and life circumstances

that existed prior to their incarceration. According to an Urban Institute study that followed Massachusetts state prisoners, the most common issues that led to reincarceration were: drugs or alcohol abuse (28 percent), lack of meaningful work (27 percent), money problems (25 percent), and emotional problems (19 percent).¹

The same way that issues with addictions and mental health are linked, problems with work and money are closely entwined. Lacking the job skills necessary to earn a reasonable wage puts ex-offenders at greater risk for returning to criminal activity and creating new victims of crime. Nearly 70 percent of the more than 650,000 adults released from prison will return within 12 to 36 months.² Once back behind bars, individuals learn how to commit future crimes and become trained to accept that prison life is a social norm. It's an intensive education that taxpayers can ill afford.

Given the current recession and ever-expanding budget deficits, reentry training offers a cost-effective way to address the operational challenges of limited resources, crowding, staff morale, public safety and negative offender behavior. With fewer individuals returning behind bars, staff members are better able to focus mission-critical

tasks, and the department can redirect the more than \$19,000 necessary to house an adult offender in an Indiana state prison for one year.

In fact, according to a cost-benefit analysis cited in an Education Reentry Roundtable Report,³ if \$1,182 per prisoner is invested in vocational training, it will generate a savings of \$6,806 in future criminal justice costs. Additionally, IDOC and ARAMARK have witnessed that when ex-offenders earn the skills and work experience needed to land a good job, they have the opportunity to change the course of their lives.

Culinary Training

Beginning in 2007, IDOC and ARAMARK implemented a novel culinary training program at no cost to taxpayers. Now called IN2WORK, the program provides classroom and hands-on vocational experience in the foodservice industry. Since its inception in Indiana, 650 adult offenders have enrolled in the program and approximately 30 juveniles have participated in a shorter version of the training program.

IN2WORK is written for students reading at a sixth-grade level, and the program materials incorporate different learning style exercises in order for students to “see, hear and experience” the content. This helps students retain and fully understand the key concepts and helps them achieve excellent scores on the exam sanctioned by the National Restaurant Association (NRA). With the successful completion of NRA’s ServSafe exam, students earn their certification which helps open doors to employment and advancement within the restaurant and hospitality industry.

IN2WORK is a multiphase program designed to teach qualified offenders transferable skills in food service. The program focuses on the comprehension and demonstration of key food service skills, as well as practices that couple classroom training with hands-on work experience in the kitchen.

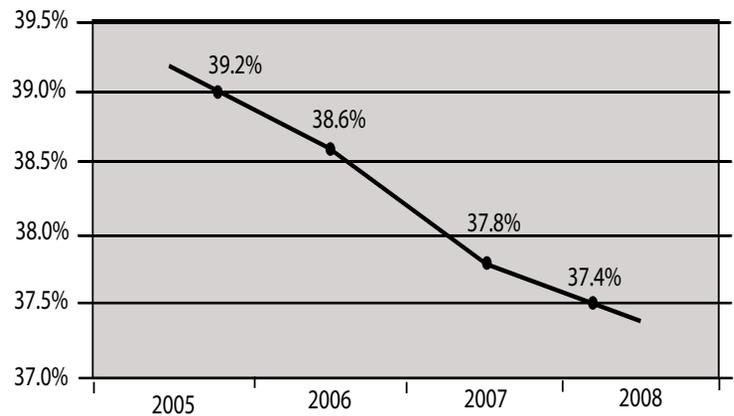
Trained and experienced instructors present an interactive three-phase curriculum that allows small classes to gain a comprehensive understanding of foodservice operation. The program is designed to meet the specific needs of the facility and accommodate the students’ sentencing. For instance, state facilities tend to hold classes at least one day a week while municipal facilities have greater flexibility on when to schedule classes, whether they be one or four hours in length.

The Kitchen Basics phase involves 15-hours of total classroom training and covers proper hygiene and sanitation techniques and why they are important. Students learn to safely operate large-scale kitchen equipment, as well as fundamentals in calculating and managing inventory and receiving merchandise and rotating stock.

Retail Basics requires 10-hours of class time in order for students to understand more about the retail-side of the business, which includes transferable skill training in customer service, merchandising, marketing, and profit and loss. Students also gain hands-on experience in retail production through ARAMARK’s FreshFavorites program. At its core, FreshFavorites functions as an incentive-based behavior modification tool that provides offenders the

2005 - 2006 Recidivism Rates

Return to IDOC within 3 years of Release Date



opportunity to purchase meals that are prepared onsite and made fresh. Menu items include pizzas, burritos, nachos, hot wings, hamburgers and Asian food. Through FreshFavorites, students gain experience in creating menu variety and managing production of multiple types of orders that better reflect what retail foodservice providers offer their customers.

The third phase focuses on ServSafe, the nationally sanctioned test of NRA. ARAMARK’s instructors cover the role that personal hygiene plays in food safety, as well as proper procedures for purchasing, storing, receiving, preparing, cooking, holding, serving, cooling and reheating food safely. Working with the ServSafe textbook, students prepare to take an exam that is mailed to NRA for grading and certification. When awarded, the ServSafe certification is valid for five years.

To qualify for IN2WORK, participants must be at least 18 years old; possess basic math skills; and be able to read and write on a sixth grade level. All applicants are interviewed by the instructors and must answer multiple choice questions to gauge what, if any, foodservice knowledge they have. Additionally, the pretest helps set expectations for the students on what the program will entail.

Program Success

Randy Focken now serves as ARAMARK’s IN2WORK program director. With more than 25 years experience in corrections (having served as IDOC’s director of reentry and parole and the deputy commissioner for community services with the Kentucky Department of Corrections), he continues to play an instrumental role in the development of offender reentry programs. “The skills and experiences gained in large-scale kitchen operations help students develop problem-solving skills, make good business practice decisions and recognize the value of routines within the workplace,” Focken said. “More importantly, they gain a real sense of personal pride in what they have achieved.”

Additionally, IN2WORK provides each student with a goal to work toward and an incentive for good behavior. The evidence of the program’s success is such that in January 2008, IDOC opted to give participants credit time of six months for successfully completing IN2WORK training and

passing the ServSafe exam. The sentence reduction helps free up the facility's capacity and positively influences an offender's demeanor within the facility. In turn, this enhances morale and the workplace environment for correctional staff.

IDOC has also worked with the U.S. Department of Labor to create a registered apprenticeship for the culinary arts at its Plainfield Reentry Facility (PREF). These efforts have produced results. In March of this year, IDOC reported that the overall recidivism rate — return to incarceration within three years of release — has declined for the third consecutive year.⁴

Other strategies to reduce recidivism and enhance public safety are part of a national dialogue. A report released by the Vera Institute in July 2009, *The Fiscal Crisis in Corrections: Rethinking Policies and Practice*,⁵ notes that 26 states of 37 surveyed have cut their corrections budget for fiscal year 2010, and all are examining additional ways to reduce operational costs.

Some groups are researching when an ex-offender can be considered no longer at risk for recidivism while others are examining sentencing practices and changes in legislation. For IDOC and ARAMARK, reducing recidivism begins with the actions of one person.

ENDNOTES

¹ Brooks, L.E., A.L. Solomon, R. Kohl, J. Osborne, J. Reid, S. McDonald, and H.M. Hoover. 2008. *Reincarcerated: The experiences of men returning to Massachusetts prisons*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute. (February).

² U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/reentry/recidivism.htm.

³ Brazzell, D., A. Crayton, D. Mukamal, A.L. Solomon, N. Lindahl. 2009. *From the classroom to the community. Exploring the role of education during incarceration and reentry*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute. (July).

⁴ Indiana Department of Corrections. 2009. *Indiana's recidivism rates decline for third consecutive year*. Press Release, 10 March. Available at www.in.gov/idoc/files/RecidivismRelease.pdf.

⁵ Scott-Hayward, C. 2009. *The fiscal crisis in corrections: Rethinking policies and practices*. Washington, D.C.: Vera Institute of Justice, Center on Sentencing and Corrections. (July).

Edwin G. Buss is commissioner of the Indiana Department of Correction. Timothy Campbell is president of ARAMARK Correctional Services.

Indiana DOC Recidivism Rates Decrease for Third Consecutive Year

The Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) defines recidivism as a return to incarceration within three years of the offender's date of release from a state correctional institution. A recent study by IDOC calculated the 2008 recidivism rate for offenders released from IDOC during 2005. This study found that:

- 2008 recidivism rates indicate a decrease for the third consecutive year. Of those offenders released in 2005, 37.4 percent were recommitted to IDOC within three years of their release date.
- Male offenders had a higher recidivism rate when compared to female offenders. Of male offenders released in 2005, 38.4 percent returned to IDOC, versus 31.1 percent of female releases.
- The recidivism rate for African American offenders increased from the prior year to 46.6 percent, while recidivism rates for Caucasian offenders decreased to 33.9 percent.
- The younger the offender is at the time he/she is released, the more likely he or she is to return to IDOC. Also, offenders serving less than two years with IDOC represent more than 80 percent of all recidivists.
- Of all offenders who recidivated, nearly 58 percent returned to IDOC for the commission of a new crime, compared to approximately 42 percent of returns for a technical rule violation of post-release supervision.
- Nearly 50 percent of all offenders released for a weapons-related crime as their most serious offense returned to incarceration within three years of release.

Offenders identified as sex offenders who were released in 2005 returned to IDOC at a higher rate than all other offenders. This is attributed to the fact that nearly 70 percent returned for a technical rule violation. However, only 1.05 percent of identified sex offenders recidivated for a new sex crime within three years.