

**Erie County Corrections  
Specialist Advisory Board  
Old County Hall**

92 Franklin St., 4th Floor  
Buffalo, NY 14202  
Switchboard: 716/858-7500



**Cindi McEachon, Chair**  
**Keisha Williams, Vice Chair**

**Members:**

**Jonathan Miles Gresham**  
**George Baba Eng      Ann Venuto**  
**Corey McCarthy      Dixie Farr**  
**Michael Ranney      Kenneth Colon**  
**Michael Deal      Felicia Beard**

July 26, 2022

Dear Legislators Baskin, Bargnesi, Johnson & Todaro:

**RE: Erie County Small Business Workforce Support Via “Former Detainee to Employee” Action Plan**

In a letter dated, March 21, 2022, the Erie County Corrections Specialist Advisory Board (“ECCSAB”) accepted your request to develop an Erie County Small Business Workforce Support Via “Former Detainee to Employee” Action Plan, in response to the resolution passed to *pilot and implement an Erie County Small Business Workforce Support Via “Former Detainee to Employee” Action Plan, working in conjunction with local re-entry organizations to identify local businesses who would be interested in employing formerly incarcerated individuals which would provide much-needed relief to industries struggling to find skilled workers as well as provide employment to justice involved individuals and reduce recidivism and improving public safety.*

To that end, on behalf of the ECCSAB, please consider the following recommended Action Plan and summary of national best practices models for your consideration. The Action Plan is divided into four phases of implementation culminating with the creation of a new division within the Erie County Sheriff’s Office (ECSO) who we believe should be responsible for full program implementation, maintenance, and monitoring. Further, it is our request that the ECSO provide periodic report-out presentations to both the Legislature as well as members of the ECCSAB at the close of each phase.

**Phase 1: Commitment**

- ECSO evaluate current space, offerings and opportunities at the Erie County Correctional Facility as well as the Erie County Holding Center to determine the most appropriate and cost-effective industries to pursue.
- ECSO request letters of commitment from at least one representative from each identified industry, with priority given to Erie County based small businesses, a minimum of one ECCSAB member, one formally incarcerated person as well as any identified community-based organization (CBO) partners.
- Establish a ‘work group’ comprised of ECSO personnel, workforce industry representative and CBO partners. This group will be responsible for development and implementation of the workforce program.
- Report out to Legislature and ECCSAB, requesting all workgroup members attend this first report-out.

**Phase 2: Curriculum & Training Development**

- Keeping jail-based workforce development best practices in mind, develop the overall program model to include definition of success, program accountability metrics, target population, required personnel and job descriptions, budget, and any other related capital costs associated with program development.
- Develop a draft implementation timeline to include budget costs associated with each phase of implementation.
- Develop the industry specific curriculum/training materials to include the frequency, anticipated number enrolled as well as anticipated number to graduate and desired outcome post release.
- Report out to the Legislature and ECCSAB.

## Phase 3: Data Collection & Accountability Reporting

- Identify all program target metrics to be collected throughout program duration as well as frequency of reporting.
- Identify data collection reporting software to be used for program monitoring.
- Report out to the Legislature and ECCSAB

## Phase 4: Implementation

- Using the established implementation timeline schedule, begin program implementation.
- Provide the Legislature and ECCSAB quarterly updates as the program progresses.

## Summary of Best Practice Program Models

Reentry programming is a comprehensive and individualized model that takes into consideration the persons need including mental health and substance abuse treatment, medical, housing, employment, legal and safety. The goal is to promote public safety while giving care, programming, training, and supportive services during incarceration and upon reentry to those returning to the community. Models that have been successful in reducing recidivism and improving outcomes in other county facilities should be examined to assist the Erie County Sheriff's Office are as follows:

**1. Cook County, Illinois** <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/departments/cook-county-department-of-corrections/programs-and-services/sheriffs-rehabilitative-programs/>. The goal of the Cook County Sheriff's Rehabilitative Programs is to prepare individuals for reintegration into their communities. Programs are rehabilitative in nature and includes the following programming:

- Religious
- Educational
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Health Transition Center (MHTC)
- Sheriff's Anti-Violence Effort (SAVE)
- Enrichment Programs
- Yoga
- Chess
- Recipe for Change
- Veteran Services

Specifically, the Recipe for Change program was founded by a Chicago Pizza Chef Bruno Abate. The program provides culinary skills training and mentorship in a state-of-the-art industrial grade kitchen. Detainees are taught food preparation, recipes, nutrition, safety, sanitation, and proper serving etiquette. It is noteworthy to state that Cook County was formerly under Department of Justice Consent Decree and underwent numerous reforms.

**2. Hampden County, Massachusetts** <http://hcsdma.org/mi/>. The philosophy of Hampden County is that reentry into the community begins on day one of incarceration. Sentenced inmates are expected to maintain a 40-hour workweek and participation in activities that include job assignments and programs. The program is multidisciplinary and encompasses:

- Recovery for substance use disorders,
- Stabilization in health and mental health conditions,
- Reunification efforts with family and established social contacts and
- Joining the work force.

# SUSPENSION

Hampden County has an employment, job search component with programming that identifies the potential for various employment opportunities. The security staff are an integral part of the team. They provide accountability and assist by instilling successful life skills, which foster structure and positive work habits. This has been the culture of the Hampden County Sheriff's Department for decades; including the current and past Sheriff.

**3. Bexar County, Texas** <https://www.bexar.org/735/Inmate-Programs-Services-Offered-at-Jail> The Bexar County Sheriff's Office sees incarceration at their facility as a "pivot point" that provides opportunity via programs to "contribute to society in a big way." Programs are diverse and comprehensive and include:

- Educational Services
- Trauma Education & Support Groups
- Life Skills
- Parenting
- Cognitive Behavioral Interventions
- Vocational Opportunities
  - Computer skills
  - Software Applications
  - Commercial Painting
  - Construction Safety-OSHA
  - General Industry Safety-OSHA
  - Customer Service Course
  - Job Readiness Training
- Reentry Programs

Bexar County uses a standardized assessment to identify individual's risk to reoffend and provide programming that addresses specific needs.

We believe that the above program models have elements that may be useful to Erie County Sheriff's Office future Workforce Support Via "Former Detainee to Employee" Program. Thank you for your commitment to improving the lives of those formally incarcerated, advancing our small businesses as well as enhancing and developing the services and culture within the Erie County Sheriff's Office. We look forward to participating in this process.

Sincerely,

The Corrections Specialist Advisory Board

Cc:

Erie County Legislature  
Erie County Sheriff  
Erie County District Attorney  
Erie County Commissioner of Probation  
Erie County Director of Equal Employment Opportunities  
Erie County Director of Public Advocacy