

Leadership Hendricks County
Class of 2011

Employment Fundamentals

Group Members

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Summary

Our group held a seminar at Hendricks County Work Release for interested inmates on Saturday, July 16, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. The seminar covered four topics: (1) How to use the library? (2) How to write a resume (3) How to use a computer and (4) How to apply for and interview for a job. Our presenters included Lynn Mills, from the Washington Township Library (Avon); Gus Percy, Kathy Davis and Bridgette Collins. Michael LeFebvre provided an opening for the event.

After the presentations concluded, we served lunch to the inmates.

Background

What is Hendricks County Work Release?

The Hendricks County Work Release provides an alternative sentencing option for those convicted of crimes that are non-violent and non-sex related. The maximum amount of time a person can be sentenced to the work release is two years. Inmates are responsible for their own transportation, healthcare and food. AVI food systems is the provider for meals. It is the responsibility of the resident to pay subsistence (room and board) while serving their sentence.

Inmates of the work release are allowed to maintain ties to the community through employment, rehabilitative services, religious worship, community service and educational betterment. While maintaining these relationships are important, it is still a correctional environment, which means that all activities are monitored and approved before allowed.

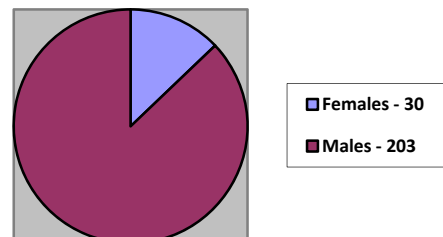
Inmates pay 20% of gross income to the facility for subsistence. Each resident has an assigned sleeping space and space to store their personal belongings. The facility divides the inmates between men and women, but the accommodations for each resident are the same. In addition to the sleeping space, each space is equipped with full restrooms, a laundry facility, and a common area with vending machines, tables and stool, a television, and reading material. Inmates may use the computer with permission, and their use will be monitored. There are telephones available for the inmates' use as well. The inmates are responsible for purchasing their own meals from the provided vending machines. The machines include entrees which can be warmed in the provided microwave.

Hendricks County Work Release accepts Community Transition Program (CTP) inmates from the Indiana Department of Correction. They have between 60-180 days left on their sentence and they return to the sentencing county to get a start on rebuilding their lives before being released from custody. These inmates had to have been sentenced to at least 2 years in IDOC.

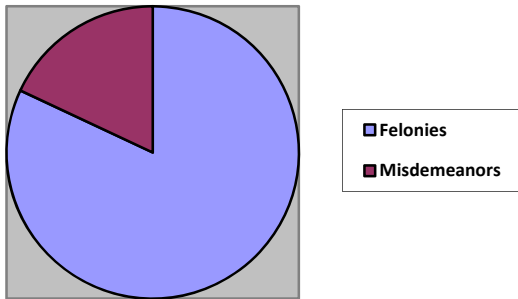
The work release facility is located on the old Hendricks County Fairgrounds in Danville, across the street from the Hendricks County Regional Hospital.

What are the statistics about the population?

In 2010, the facility served 233 inmates. The population included 203 males and 30 females. The inmates had committed both



felonies and misdemeanors, 81% of the crimes leading to incarceration were felonies and 19% were misdemeanors.



The facility has an average daily population of 50 inmates, broken out as roughly 44 males and 6 females.

The program has a 75% success rate – meaning the inmate was released without new charges or being remanded to the Jail or Department of Correction. In

2010, the program was 87% successful with the females and 73% successful with the males.

The inmates, on average, are high school graduates. The average income is \$9 / hour (\$18,720 annually). Many come from single parent homes, or home where a parent is incarcerated. Many have children being raised by other family members.

In contrast, the recent census shows that 93% of Hendricks County residents have their high school diploma and 30% have a Bachelors degree.¹ The per capita income in Hendricks County is \$29,303 – more than \$10,000 more than the average inmate at Hendricks County Work Release.

Typical crimes committed by inmates in Work Release include: Habitual Traffic Violator, Theft, Operating While Intoxicated, Receiving Stolen Property, Failure to Pay Child Support, or Fraud/Forgery.

What are the benefits to the community for having a work release program?

The criminal justice system offers several models to protect society at large. Our laws provide clear deterrence against criminal activity: as in, if you do this, then that will happen.

Another way to prevent crime is incarceration of those who have committed a crime. Work release focuses on rehabilitation of the person who has broken the law.

Participation in the Work Release program can provide the following benefits to inmates.

- Provides inmates the opportunity to participate in full time normal employment or vocational training in the community.
- Permits inmates the opportunity to develop or strengthen good work habits and skills.
- Affords inmates opportunities to continue or strengthen constructive ties with family, friends, and the community.
- Permits the pre-release preparation of inmates and the opportunity to evaluate the readiness of these inmates for release to the community.
- Permits disbursements to be made from inmate earnings to help defray the cost of incarceration, support dependents, reduce debts, and pay court fines.
- Enables inmates to accumulate savings to help meet financial needs or burdens after release from confinement.
- Provides inmates the opportunity to meet family needs.
- Provides inmates the opportunity to earn work credits, which will reduce the time to be served on the inmate's sentence.

Work release not only serves the offender, but also allows the offender to bear some of the cost of his incarceration, thus easing the burden of payment on the community.

Event

The event was held on Saturday, July 16. Eleven inmates attended the presentations. Michael opened the meeting with an introduction to the theme of the seminar and the speakers. He quoted the proverb, *"If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength. But wisdom helps one succeed"* (Eccl. 10:10). Just as a lumberjack improves his tree cutting by taking time to sit and sharpen his axe, so taking a Saturday morning to think about ways to sharpen ones job hunting skills can have significant benefits over the longrun, especially in the present economy. The four speakers were introduced with their topics.

The theme was pretty well focused around job hunting and employability skills. Our speakers included:

- Lynn Mills (Head Reference Librarian, Avon/Washington Township Public Library) — Introduction to library services for job seekers
- Gus Percy (Communications Consultant, Gus Percy Communications) — How to prepare a resume
- Kathy Davis (Right of Way Manager, RW Armstrong and Associates) — Basic computer skills essential for most jobs
- Bridgette Collins (Work Release Director)— Putting your best foot forward in a job interview

Lynn Mills then covered what job searching services are available at the library. We also learned about computer classes offered by the library, as well as what items can be checked out from the library. We were also told about how to obtain a library card in the area in which you live, and what documents you would need to obtain a library card. Finally, a drawing was held, and bags of books were distributed to four lucky inmates.

Gus Percy, Communications Specialist went next. Mr. Percy distributed a handout with an example of two types of resumes: the chronological and the skills resume. He then covered why you need a resume, even if you have filled out a job application. He went on to

discuss the format of the resume, including font, paper, spacing, length. He emphasized many times the need to proofread your resume to ensure no typos, misspellings or grammatical mistakes. He also addressed some tricky questions: What do you say if you've been fired? What do you say if there is a gap in your work history due to incarceration? How do you answer the "Have you been convicted of a felony question?" In summary, his advice: tell the truth, but show you have learned and grown from the experience.

Kathy Davis then presented on How to Use a Computer. The presentation covered the basic parts of a computer, as well as how to use programs such as Word, Excel and the Internet. Some of the inmates were already techno-savvy, but others barely knew how to turn a computer on. The presentation provided a brief introduction to the idea. Individuals who wanted to learn more were encouraged to check out the opportunities available at the library for learning more about the computer and computer programs.

Bridgette Collins concluded the presentations with a discussion on interviewing for a job. Some highlights: wear professional dress, even if the position is not a professional one. Pay attention to your personal grooming and your outward appearance. Do not show up late, in fact – show up fifteen minutes early. Be confident. Bring a copy of your resume in a folder for the interviewer. Keep your discussion focused on the position and your ability to do the position well, not on your personal issues.

After the presentations concluded, we served lunch provided by Aramark to the inmates and the team. The team disbursed and ate with the inmates, answering questions and continuing the discussion from the seminar.

Feedback

After the seminar, we distributed surveys for feedback from the inmates on the quality of the presentation. Our lowest rating of the seminar was an 8.5. Most were 9s and 10s. The inmates felt that the Resume presentation would make the most difference in their lives, but thought that all of the topics were interesting.

Best parts

- Having people present instead of recordings/slide shows etc.
- Handouts
- Informative resume section
- People took the time to come and talk to them, sincerity of the speakers, attempts to help them make better choices
- Food first and then learning about the library and what to do on interviews
- Interviews portion due to not interviewing in a long time, so many great reminders of do's and don'ts

Improvements

- Expansion of resume portion to include applications, more on how to answer tough questions, sharing "key words"
- More Food
- Too much info in one day, each segment deserved more than ½ hr so more questions and discussion could take place
- Offer a list of employers that hire felons (I have since given one to this person)
- Actually completing a resume, application on-line etc

Bridgette has been emailing back and forth reviewing resumes with one of the women and answering random questions as they arise.

Overall, they were very pleased and thank everyone for participating. They also wanted to know why Jeff didn't speak...(he must've gotten their attention).

ⁱ Census information found at: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/18/18063.html>