



Andrew M. Cuomo - Governor

Governor Cuomo Announces "Work for Success" Employment Initiative for the Formerly Incarcerated

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Initiative Will Increase Job Readiness and Improve Employment Outcomes for Thousands of New Yorkers

Albany, NY (February 17, 2012)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the creation of "Work for Success," a jobs initiative aimed at reducing the high unemployment rate among the thousands of New Yorkers returning home from prison. Work for Success will develop a comprehensive statewide approach to increase job readiness and improve employment outcomes for the formerly incarcerated. This initiative will benefit all New Yorkers by creating more tax-paying, law-abiding citizens, which will make streets safer and strengthen the state's entire economy.

"Tens of thousands of people leave New York State prisons each year and without employment most are at higher risk of returning to incarceration," Governor Cuomo said. "The 'Work for Success' initiative will reduce poverty and joblessness for some of our state's hardest to employ citizens, while enhancing public safety and improving economic conditions for the families and communities to which they return."

Governor Cuomo's Work for Success initiative will address the employment needs of formerly incarcerated people who are at higher risk of recidivism. Over the course of the next year, Work for Success will:

- Evaluate the employment programs that currently exist for the formerly incarcerated and carry out evidence-based, action-oriented research to identify which strategies work best
- Promote building relevant job readiness skills throughout correctional programming
- Align vocational skills programs with specific credentialing pathways and employment opportunities in the New York labor market
- Help to effectively connect New Yorkers returning from prison with appropriate employment services
- Build the capacity of local community organizations to address the unique needs of people with criminal convictions

Work for Success will be led by policy makers, representatives from government agencies, and practitioners from across the nation with expertise in employment services for the formerly incarcerated. The Executive Committee for Work for Success will be chaired by Mindy Tarlow, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), a non-profit provider that offers comprehensive employment services exclusively for people with criminal records. CEO promotes the evidence-based practices in which Work for Success will be grounded. A recent study published by research corporation MDRC found that CEO's employment model for newly released prison inmates resulted in a 22 percent decrease of convictions..

Members of the Executive Committee will include members of the Governor's Office, as well as representatives from the following organizations:

- Brooklyn Treatment Alternative to Crime
- Buffalo Urban League
- Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services
- Center for Community Alternatives
- Council of State Governments Justice Center
- The Doe Fund
- F•E•G•S Health and Human Services System
- Fortune Society
- Greenhope Services for Women
- Hour Children
- Legal Action Center
- National Skills Coalition
- Osborne Association
- Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice
- STRIVE
- Urban Institute

New York State Senator Michael Nozzolio, Chairman of the Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee, said, "Many New Yorkers who return home from prison face the very real problem of finding a job. While the economic climate is difficult for all New Yorkers, those with prior criminal convictions have an even harder time gaining employment. I commend Governor Cuomo for spearheading his 'Work for Success' initiative to help this vulnerable population to rebuild their lives and return to being productive, contributing members of our state."

New York State Assemblymember Herman "Denny" Farrell, Jr., Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, said, "The high rate of unemployment among formerly incarcerated New Yorkers is a detriment to all of the people of our state, not just to those with criminal records. This is a serious matter that will not be solved by writing a report that will only sit on a shelf. The 'Work for Success' initiative provides the effective employment strategy that this issue demands. Through this approach, New York can make real progress in helping fellow citizens returning from incarceration to reenter society in a way that is beneficial to our whole state. I thank Governor Cuomo for making this innovative initiative a priority."

New York State Assemblymember Jeffrion Aubry, Chairman of the Assembly Standing Committee on Correction, said, "In order to get our state back on the path to prosperity, we must consider the needs of all New Yorkers. Governor Cuomo's 'Work for Success' initiative does this by aggressively working to combat the cycle of unemployment facing New Yorkers coming home from prison. I am proud to work with the Governor to ensure that this initiative is a success so that we help these individuals in need and benefit our economy statewide."

Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer Mindy Tarlow said, "We are thrilled to be involved in this initiative at such a critical moment. It is essential that we make sure that people coming home from prison get the right employment services at the right time to help them successfully rejoin their families and communities. We thank Governor Cuomo for his leadership and look forward to carrying out his vision to help all New Yorkers."

Legal Action Center Director and President Paul Samuels said, "We are proud to be working on such a vital tool for building strong communities. By helping New Yorkers who return home from prison to have productive lives, we will benefit all members of our statewide community. Governor Cuomo's 'Work for Success' initiative would be helpful under any circumstances, but in today's economic climate, this approach is crucial to the health of our communities and the strength of our economy."

The Fortune Society, Inc. President & CEO JoAnne Page said, "Through more than 45 years of providing re-entry services to thousands of men and women a year, The Fortune Society knows that, without legitimate employment, formerly incarcerated people face a strong prospect of returning to prison. Through 'Work for Success,' we can assist these individuals by providing them with necessary employment services, improving their job readiness, and helping them find suitable employment opportunities. I thank Governor Cuomo for his leadership and for making such an important initiative a reality in New York State."

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