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New State Program Matches Ex-Cons With Job Training and Jobs

A program to aid convicts exiting New York State prisons get jobs was announced last week by the New York State Department of Labor and the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

The two agencies will collaborate as part of the "Work for Success" program. The Department of Corrections will begin by evaluating exiting prisoners for risk of recidivism - the risk of returning to the criminal life. Those assessed as "low risk" and having "low barriers to employment," will be sent to Department of Labor Career Centers for job training and placement assistance.

Higher risk individuals - who likely have a low chance of getting a job - will be offered training through programs offered by nonprofit corporations in their community.

The purpose of the program is to decrease recidivism.

The acting commissioner of the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, Anthony J. Annucci, said, "Jobs programs like this help provide the motivation and confidence to keep the offender moving forward and becoming a valuable member of the community."

Those who employ former prisoners receive federal tax breaks and other benefits and services.

In fiscal year 2010, New York taxpayers paid \$3.6 billion in prison expenditures and related costs to incarcerate an average daily population of 59,237 or \$60,076 per inmate per year.

New York has closed nine prisons since 2011 as the number of inmates continues to dwindle.

The inmate population has dropped to about 54,600 after peaking in 1999 at 72,584 under Rockefeller-era drug laws.

Those mandatory sentencing guidelines were relaxed amid a drop in state crime rate over the past 10 years.

A 2002 study survey showed that among nearly 275,000 prisoners released in 1994, 67.5% were rearrested within 3 years, and 51.8% were back in prison.