

Governor Cuomo Announces Job Summits to Support Re-Entry Professionals That Assist Formerly Incarcerated Individuals as They Rejoin Their Communities

First of Three Summits for Professionals Who Work in Re-Entry Held Today in New York City

Next Summits to Be Held in Western New York and Capital Region

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced three “job summits” that support professionals that specialize in aiding the transition and re-entry of formerly incarcerated individuals back into their communities. The first summit, held today in New York City, was attended by approximately 70 professionals from organizations that provide a variety of re-entry services, including job training, placement and skill development.

“These summits are connecting re-entry professionals with the resources and support they need to help formerly incarcerated individuals find employment and become productive members of their community,” Governor Cuomo said. “By improving the re-entry process, we are fundamentally reforming our criminal justice system and laying the groundwork for a safer and stronger New York.”

The summits are a joint initiative of three state agencies: the Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, and the Department of Labor. New York State’s 19 County Re-entry Task Forces receive approximately \$3 million in state funding to support re-entry services which are designed to coordinate and manage services for formerly incarcerated individuals upon return to their communities.

Alphonso David, Counsel to the Governor, said, “Gainful employment is essential for formerly incarcerated individuals to effectively transition from state prison to become productive members of their communities. Further, research shows that reducing recidivism has a direct impact on making communities safer. These job summits will provide professionals with assistance and resources to achieve those equally important goals. In addition, Governor Cuomo’s Council on Community Re-entry and Reintegration is working diligently to review the state’s laws and regulations and examine how to remove barriers for individuals seeking employment.”

Mr. David offered keynote remarks at the summit. Prior to his appointment as counsel, he served as Governor Cuomo’s deputy secretary and counsel for civil rights, the first position of its kind in the state. In that role, he was responsible for a full range of legal, policy, legislative, and operational matters affecting civil rights and labor statewide. Also attending the summit was Elizabeth de Leon Bhargava, who serves as Governor Cuomo’s deputy secretary for labor.

Today's summit, hosted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, targeted professionals who work with re-entry task forces in the Bronx, Kings (Brooklyn), New York (Manhattan), Nassau, Orange, Rockland Suffolk and Westchester counties. Two other job summits will be hosted in the Capital Region and Western New York in the coming months for professionals who work in the other task force counties: Albany, Broome, Dutchess, Erie, Monroe, Niagara, Oneida, Onondaga, Rensselaer, Schenectady and Ulster.

Attendees participated in panel discussions about challenges and successes of re-entry employment, how to prepare formerly incarcerated people for the workforce and matching the right people to the right programs for job development and placement. The Division of Criminal Justice Services' Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives is coordinating the summit. The office provides training and technical assistance to the 19 county re-entry task forces with the goal of reducing recidivism and as a result, improving community safety.

Michael C. Green, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Criminal Justice Services, said, "While New York is the safest large state in the country and has the lowest incarceration rate of any large state, we must continue to reduce incarceration and crime. Helping formerly incarcerated citizens find meaningful employment is an important part of our strategy to accomplish these goals. The task forces work with formerly incarcerated individuals and their families through public awareness and education campaigns and use evidence-based practices such as cognitive behavioral interventions and employment-focused goals with the aim of positive outcomes for all involved, namely less crime, less victimization and less incarceration."

Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Acting Commissioner Anthony J. Annucci said, "I would like to thank Governor Cuomo for the opportunity to bring the necessary agencies together to discuss employment opportunities for ex-offenders. The ability to secure employment is not only a critical first step to successful re-entry, it has proven to reduce the cycle of incarceration. New York's employer hiring incentives, as well as other important initiatives like Work for Success, recognize New York is serious about public safety and is prepared to assist and address the challenges faced by ex-offenders."

Mario J. Musolino, Acting State Labor Commissioner, said, "Summits like these help us create programs that make a difference in people's lives. A formerly incarcerated individual beginning or, in many cases, re-starting their career can also strengthen a community. The Department of Labor and our partner agencies in state government

have many tools to help the formerly incarcerated rejoin New York's thriving economy."

In each of the 19 counties, the Re-Entry Task Forces are chaired by a representative of the county's chief elected official and a representative from the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. The state grants provide funding for a Task Force coordinator in each county and funding for services that otherwise wouldn't be available. Task Forces include representatives from law enforcement, community supervision, social services, mental health, victim advocacy and substance abuse treatment providers.