

**PREPARATION OF BACKGROUND PAPER ON TRAINING, EDUCATION, AND
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR OFFENDERS AND EX-OFFENDERS**

U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration

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Project Summary: With the U.S. correctional population expanding rapidly -- and about one-half million offenders leaving the system each year -- well-structured and intensive education, training, and employment programs could hold the key to reducing rates of recidivism and costs of incarceration in the U.S. For example, upgrading basic skills, educational credentials, and job-specific skills may enhance ex-offenders' prospects for long-term employment (i.e., securing a job with self-sustaining wages and career potential). Job readiness/job search workshops and job placement assistance can enhance the effectiveness of search strategies employed by ex-offenders, shortening search time after release and helping ex-offenders find full-time jobs suited to their abilities and interests. Ongoing tracking, case management, and well-coordinated support services can help to head off problems before they lead to job loss. In addition to reducing prison costs, in-prison, pre-release, and post-prison transition programs may help to reduce long-term costs of criminal activity for society and, in a strong U.S. economy, ease critical labor shortages in specific industrial and occupational sectors.

This short-term study was centered on the preparation of a background paper, intended to support DOL/ETA policy and program development efforts. The paper provided information on the U.S. prison population and synthesized what was known about education, training, and employment services to help offenders and ex-offenders make the transition from prison to work. This report relied on existing literature and readily available data sources. It began with an overview of the U.S. prison system, including basic demographic information on the U.S. prison population in federal and state prisons, and local jails. The paper assessed broad categories of education, employment, and training programs offered to offenders while in prison and in pre-release programs, as well as post-prison transition activities for ex-offenders. This synthesis was followed by brief synopses of model programs from the federal prison system and selected state or other correctional systems. The paper concluded with a discussion of areas where experimentation in service design would appear to be most beneficial and options for involvement of federal, state, and local correctional facilities, workforce development agencies, and educational authorities in initiatives to help offenders and ex-offenders transition from prison to work.

Report: J. Trutko, *Background Information on Training, Education, and Employment Services for Offenders and Ex-offenders*, The Urban Institute, prepared for the Employment and Training Administration, Department of Labor, 1999.