

REENTRY

A COLLABORATIVE

Today

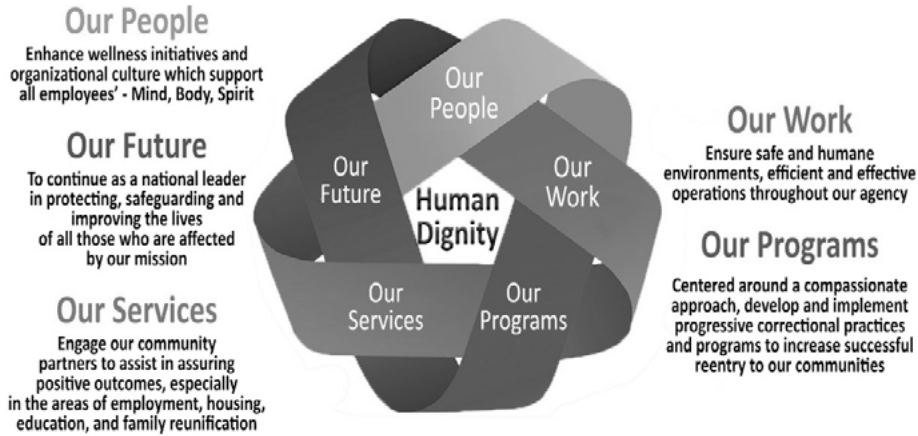
We need to remember that these guys will be returning to our communities, and once that happens, the work skills they have learned here will assist them in joining the workforce.

Ray Munroe, Manager
Correctional Enterprises of Connecticut



ISSUE No. 1
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Department of Correction Strategic Plan



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ABOUT REENTRY TODAY A COLLABORATIVE

Welcome to the first issue of *Reentry Today*, a joint publication of the CT Department of Correction and the CT Reentry Collaborative. Designed to bridge the gap between what's happening to support reentry both inside and outside of the state's correctional institutions, the newsletter provides featured articles, interviews, updates, visual media, informative graphics, general information and more. *Reentry Today* will be published in print four times a year and will also be available online at www.ctreentry.org.



VETDOGS IN TRAINING AT OSBORN

FROM THE DESK OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Rollin Cook has identified reentry as a major priority for DOC and under his leadership, a Director of Reentry Services position has been established – the first ever in the history of Connecticut. The Director of Reentry Services oversees reentry staff and agency-wide comprehensive reentry programs that include but are not limited to transition planning, pre-release engagement, workforce development, life skills, identification procurement, and continuity of services and supports for individuals as they transition from incarceration to the community. Data shows that successful reentry requires the application of evidence informed reentry strategies, policies, methods and services both pre and post incarceration. Informed by data, Commissioner Cook's strategies are centered in education, substance abuse treatment, employment, job readiness, housing, appropriate medical care, mentoring, and family reunification. The Director of Reentry Services supports these strategies as well as develops cooperative relationships and collaborations among state agencies, municipalities, nonprofits, community groups, and all stakeholders in reentry to support incarcerated individuals, strengthen families and communities, and reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

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INSIDE OSBORN

AN INTERVIEW WITH REENTRY
COUNSELOR MILLER

The Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC) Reentry Services Unit aims to assist incarcerated individuals as they re-enter their community after incarceration. Each facility across the state has either a part-time or full-time Reentry Counselor that aids in successful reintegration by creating connections with community programs that provide employment or other treatment services. This process begins upon DOC intake and ends with a discharge meeting to ensure all supports are in place prior to the offender's transition home. Osborn Correctional Institution also holds monthly discharge meetings every month to discuss reentry plans in further detail for specific individuals.

Working between both Osborn and Northern Correctional Institutions, Counselor Miller's day begins by checking her mailbox that is filled with anywhere from 30 to 50 requests from individuals seeking reentry resources and guidance. Miller works with a growing number of community organizations throughout Connecticut to ensure that the people whom she has assisted have the best chance to succeed on the outside. Miller's office window is covered in flyers that showcase available resources, and she went out



RESOURCES SHARED BY COUNSELOR MILLER

of her way to create binders full of updated resources for individuals to browse and refer to in the library.

"...Inspiration, motivation and determination are necessary for successful reintegration."

Every third Tuesday of the month, the American Job Center (AJC) – a job and employment partnership between state, regional and local organizations – hosts presentations that highlight what the AJC can offer individuals. The AJC has multiple locations throughout Connecticut and assist individuals with interview techniques, resume building, and a variety of employment-related services. Miller reports that anywhere from 25 to 50 individuals take advantage of these opportunities each month.

In addition to this partnership, Our Piece of the Pie – a reentry program in Hartford geared towards young adults – has just begun at Osborn

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PREPARING FOR REENTRY

AN INTERVIEW WITH
HENRY CARTER

Henry Carter describes himself as someone who is "intelligent, loves to have a good time, and misunderstood." With the guidance of Counselor Miller, Henry is the ideal example of someone who has proactively used DOC's reentry programs and services at Osborn to his advantage.

Serving a lengthy sentence beginning at just 19 years old, Henry participated in any and every program available to him through the DOC, including ID procurement, American Job Center trainings and presentations, the VOICES Victim Impact program, vocational training in facility maintenance, parenting classes, and most other reentry offerings.

When Henry isn't preparing for his upcoming reentry, he finds time to study business administration at Asnuntuck Community College as a Pell student. The federal Second Chance Pell Pilot Program allows eligible incarcerated Americans to receive Pell Grants through the U.S. Department of Education to pursue postsecondary education with the goal of helping obtain and maintain employment.

Once he leaves Osborn, Henry plans to finish his degree, attend cosmetology school to become a trained barber, and open his own barbershop one day. He has already begun researching available grants and funds that can help him meet his entrepreneurship goals.

"If they know I can do it, they will know they can too."

Henry is confident that he will be successful, but also understands that reentry is not going to be easy. He is "mentally prepared, motivated, and has a very detailed plan," though. When asked what he believes are the essential pieces for successful reentry, Henry quickly lists employment, health insurance, family support, education, and community outreach at the top. Henry proudly speaks about the importance of

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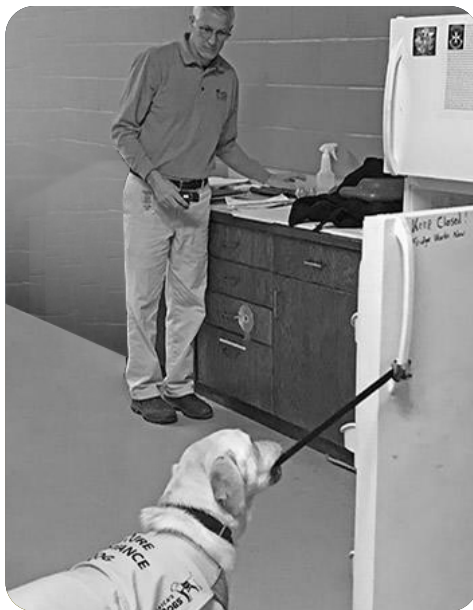


AN AMERICAN JOB CENTER PRESENTATION AT OSBORN

GIVING BACK

TRAINING AMERICA'S VETDOGS

Connecticut is 1 of only 14 states that works with incarcerated individuals to train service dogs within the facility for America's VetDogs. America's VetDogs provides highly-skilled dogs to veterans, active-duty service members, and first responders dealing with physical injuries, PTSD, hearing and vision loss, and seizures. The dogs are trained by men at Osborn to assist veterans with physical tasks such as opening doors, drawers, and handles and alerting the veteran/first responders of situations including ringing door bells and phones. Counselor Smith has been coordinating the program for several years and spoke of one dog in particular that was known for waking up his owner when he was having a nightmare related to PTSD. The dog would turn on the light with his snout, grab a bottle of water from the fridge, and sit on the bed with his owner until he calmed down. The dog would then turn off the light and leave to rest easily, knowing he did a job well done.



MARK TYLER, VETDOGS TRAINER
AND ONE OF OSBORN'S TRAINEES

There are currently thirteen dogs living and actively training at Osborn, with two of dogs just under the age of four months. Each dog lives in their trainer's cell in a specific wing of Osborn that allows secure access to a small yard and patio for the dogs to use the bathroom as often as necessary. Each pup in training is assigned a primary caregiver and a

secondary caregiver from the participating trainers. This is to ensure the dog is always being taken care of and requires the trainers to collaborate, communicate, and share responsibilities to provide for their dog. Mark Tyler, trainer for America's VetDogs at Osborn, proudly explains that "each dog lives with his trainers at Osborn for approximately a year during the week and then stays with a volunteer 'foster family' on the weekends to allow the dog to experience real-world smells, sights, sounds, and situations. These dogs are similar to family and children for the trainers. The bond and dedication these trainers have is obvious."

After nearly a year of training both inside and outside Osborn, the dog attends the VetDogs' graduation ceremony, where the trainers witness their dog being matched with someone in need. This ceremony is often bittersweet for the trainers, as they know they will no longer have their dog by their side but also that they helped change someone's life in a positive way.

Counselor Smith says the trainers bene-

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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

CORRECTIONAL ENTERPRISES OF CONNECTICUT

Correctional Enterprises of Connecticut (CEC), often called "Industries", is a financially self-supporting unit within the DOC's Administrative Division. CEC is authorized by state statute to provide goods and services to state agencies, municipalities, non-profit entities, and benefit corporations. The CEC program and its' various manufacturing operations offer incarcerated individuals opportunities to be productive and engaged, learn and develop both hard and soft skills, and help to prepare them for reentry into our communities. Participation in CEC's programs is voluntary and provides opportunities in woodworking, metal fabrication, graphic arts,

silk screen printing, laundry, printing, textile manufacturing, embroidery, and Braille transcription. Ray Munroe, Correctional Industries Manager, proudly boasts that the "products being made at Osborn by these guys are high quality." CEC contracts with many different state agencies including DOC as the largest customer, followed by the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Transportation, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and most state colleges and universities.

*"I was able to get this job
because of what I learned
with you in Industries."*

When asked about the purpose of the opportunities within CEC while incarcerated, Ray explains that participation in the program is a coveted

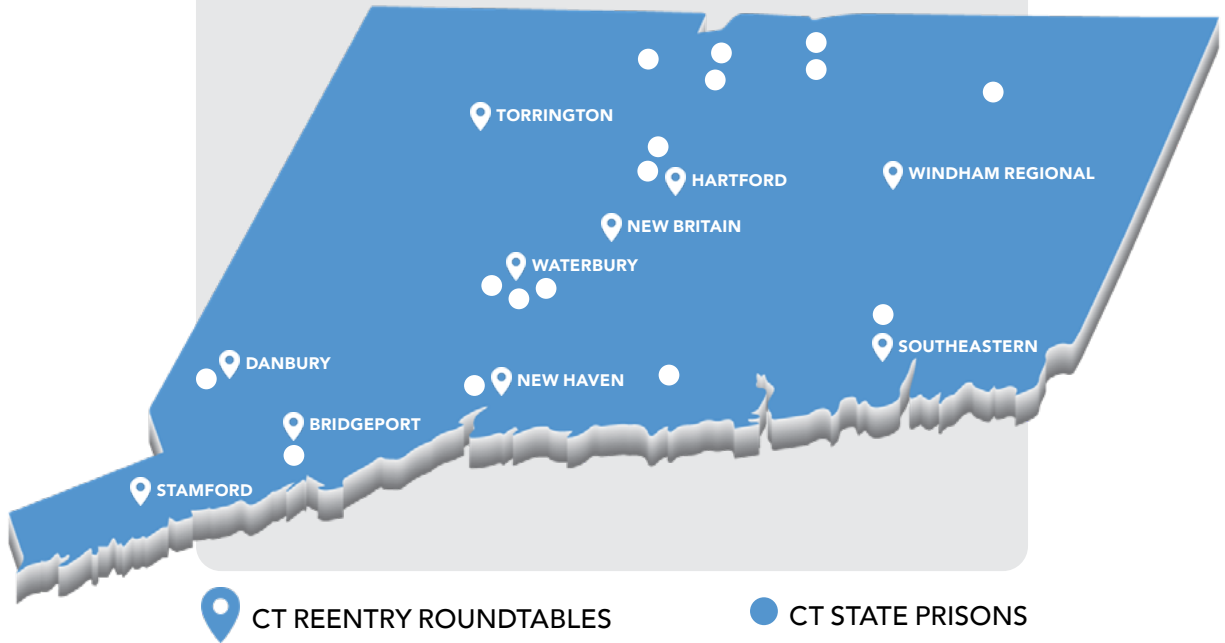
assignment and has a higher pay scale than other facility assignments. Because the specific training for a CEC assignment takes time Ray prefers

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SCREEN-PRINTING MACHINE USED IN "INDUSTRIES"

REENTRY IN CONNECTICUT



HARTFORD REENTRY ROUNDTABLE ATTENDEES

THE CT REENTRY COLLABORATIVE

The CT Reentry Collaborative is currently made up of ten active reentry roundtables located in Bridgeport, Danbury, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, Southeastern CT, Stamford, Torrington, Waterbury, and Windham. Each roundtable began out of a recognized need for more intensive efforts to increase successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals into their local communities upon release. Membership includes employers, academics, policy leaders, community leaders, impacted individuals, service providers, representatives from law enforcement, parole, probation, and others. Bridgeport is the oldest roundtable, beginning in 2007.

The CT Reentry Collaborative is a grass-

roots effort that has been working to improve communication with the CT Department of Correction, build support within local municipalities, utilize local higher education resources, create resource guides, host local employment and resource fairs, and generate momentum to foster change in each community. We sponsor the annual Building Bridges conference at Central Connecticut State University, as well as CT Reentry Reform day at the State Capitol in Hartford.

In 2018 we worked with the outgoing Malloy Administration to produce the State of Connecticut's Reentry Strategy – the first since 2011. It outlined accomplishments to date, as well as strategies to continue the state's well-recognized reform movement. It identified as core beliefs: creating safer communities, supporting the rights of victims, reducing recidivism, and treating individuals

with dignity and respect as they return home from incarceration.

In 2019, we began to implement the next steps as outlined in the Reentry Strategy. Two of the key strategic directions we are focusing on are access to services and reentry transition planning. The CT Reentry Collaborative is working with the DOC Reentry Division and the Reentry Counselors in five DOC facilities (York, McDougal-Walker, Osborn, Brooklyn, and Willard-Cybulski) to create in-reach, case planning, and coordination for end of sentence individuals with three new pilot reentry welcome centers, located in Bridgeport, Stamford, and New Haven. These will be aligned with current efforts underway in Hartford and Waterbury. We are excited for the possibilities and eager to show the value of working together to create a seamless pathway to success for those returning to Connecticut's communities.

SPOTLIGHT ON STAMFORD REENTRY ROUNDTABLE

Since its inception in the summer of 2018, the Stamford Reentry Roundtable has assisted in successful reentry for previously incarcerated residents in the Stamford area. Through partnerships and collaboration with state and local community organizations, the Roundtable identifies reentry needs and addresses gaps in services for individuals returning to the community. The Roundtable achieves this work through subcommittees that focus on four specific areas: employment, housing, advocacy, and the provision of additional community resources. The Stamford Reentry Roundtable hopes to continue to build capacity so they can serve as a direct hub for returning citizens.



STAMFORD REENTRY ROUNDTABLE MONTHLY MEETING



DOMUS IN STAMFORD

SPOTLIGHT ON DOMUS/INVICTUS

Domus is a multiservice organization currently serving more than 1,800 vulnerable youth. While the organization specifically targets the Stamford area, it also serves also approximately 565 youth from across the state through educational services at juvenile detention centers in Bridgeport and Hartford. Youth come to Domus with many challenges, including poverty, involvement in the criminal justice system, home-

lessness, academic failure, and chronic, untreated health issues. Domus works to help these young people gain the skills and services they need to graduate from high school and be ready to attend a post-secondary opportunity or gain employment earning a livable wage.

Domus also offers a program called Invictus, which is a pre-release/reentry program which serves young men aged 18-25 years. The program utilizes a trauma-responsive approach to break the cycle of incarceration and provide vocational training, internships, transporta-

tion assistance, medical assistance, legal counseling, ID procurement, and educational support.

Invictus works with individuals in the following facilities: Bridgeport, Cheshire, Manson Youth Institution, Corrigan-Radgowski, Osborn, Robinson, and Brooklyn. The reentry counselors in each of these facilities serves as an Invictus liaison. Individuals transitioning back to the Stamford area can contact Domus up to six months prior to their release date to receive individualized services to their personal overcome barriers to success.

INSIDE OSBORN

AN INTERVIEW WITH REENTRY COUNSELOR MILLER

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Despite these efforts to train individuals for successful careers, many continue to have difficulty obtaining gainful employment once released. To combat this, the Department of Correction has encouraged individuals to obtain a Certificate of Employability. Once known as a partial pardon, this certificate serves as a form of relief from the barriers to obtaining employment or a professional license. The CT Judicial Branch presents on Certificates of Employability on the first Monday of every month.

Throughout the years, Miller has prioritized making connections with formerly incarcerated persons in hopes they can return to share their

stories, challenges and successes, and thoughts about life in the community. In the coming years, Miller anticipates that the unit will expand. "Having more full-time counselors in each facility who specialize in one aspect of reentry would have positive results," she asserts. Personally, Miller is planning to expand her reentry resources during the upcoming year. This will include creating new partnerships with the Goodwill Reentry Initiative (GRI), and P.R.I.D.E (People Reentering Into Doing Entrepreneurship) program and adding another Resource Fair in May. Miller proudly shares that the last resource fair held in June 2019 was attended by 360 inmates and featured 40 different vendors, making it the largest resource fair inside a correctional facility in the state!

Miller believes that inspiration, motivation and determination are necessary for successful reintegration.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

CORRECTIONAL ENTERPRISE OF CONNECTICUT

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to have someone with at least a year remaining on his sentence to ensure the program participant has enough opportunity to develop the right skill-set so he or she can utilize those tools upon reentry and succeed. Also, Ray asserts "nearly all of the CEC program participants are sending money home

for their family's expenses. Participation in CEC's programs are necessary and important to them."

Ray is proud of his shop, the quality of the goods produced and especially of the program participants and staff. "Many former program participants call me when they leave and land a job and say, 'I was able to get this job because of what I learned with you in Industries and that is how it should be.' We need to remember that these men and women are part of the workforce once they leave here."

GIVING BACK

TRAINING AMERICA'S VET DOGS

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CONT.

fit from this program and that the job is highly sought after and difficult to obtain. Trainers cannot have any disciplinary issues, must pass several background checks related to animals, have patience and demonstrate commitment to at least a year of caring and training to participate. Smith points out, though, that it is not just the recipients of these skilled dogs who benefit from this program partnership – the trainers at Osborn do, too. "These individuals develop a sense of worth, empowerment, validation and love," she says. "And we are now coordinating with the CT Department of Labor so that participating trainers can receive a certificate in husbandry training upon release."

From start to finish, including care and training, each dog costs approximately \$50-60,000 and is matched with a veteran in need for no cost to the recipient. If you or someone you know is interested in helping grow this powerful program, visit www.vetdogs.org/Default.aspx to learn more.

PREPARING FOR REENTRY

AN INTERVIEW WITH HENRY CARTER

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CONT.

the reentry programs and services often and has told Counselor Miller that he plans to return and share his success story with men currently at Osborn. Henry says, "if they know I can do it, they will know they can too."



THE FLOOR OF THE TEXTILE SHOP IN "INDUSTRIES"

EMPOWERMENT FOR SUCCESS

On December 4, 2019, over one hundred women gathered together at the Chrysalis Center in Hartford for an event called *Empowerment for Success*. Organized by the City of Hartford and Community Partners in Action, this free, day-long event provided an opportunity for women who have been impacted by the criminal justice system to hear from motivational speakers on several pertinent topics, participate in a job readiness workshop, attend a special performance by the Judy Dworin Performance Project, connect with twenty-four resource vendors, and so much more. The event also featured a panel discussion with women with lived experience, and their message of hope leaving audience members emotional and inspired.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

The CT Department of Correction, in collaboration with the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Urban Institute, and Community Works-West, selected the Cybulski Community Reintegration Center as one of five pilot sites in the nation to implement model practices focusing on incarcerated parents and their children.

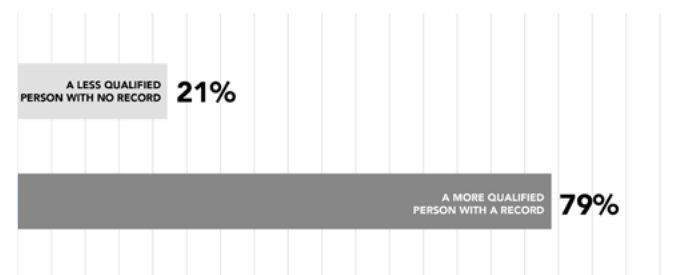
The objective of the Family Connections project is to implement a set of practices that remove barriers to positive familial relationships and create opportunities to enhance family connections among the incarcerated parent, their children, co-parents, and caregivers. Accomplishing the objective will require a three-pronged approach that leverages community-based resources and forges partnerships between the Department of Correction, other state agencies, and the community to: (1) Foster interaction that fulfills children's developmental needs and wants to have a relationship

with their incarcerated parents and vice versa; (2) Encourage incarcerated parents through parental education to take responsibility for their children; and (3) Provide opportunities that promote family reunification efforts and strengthen familial bonds. The overall goal of the programming is to improve wellness of the children, their incarcerated parent, and their caregivers by strengthening the family connection while sustaining safety and security in the facility.

THE CBIA EMPLOYMENT LAW CONFERENCE (ISSUES-V)

The 2019 Employment Law Conference delivered an in-depth overview of some of the most challenging employment law issues impacting businesses, human resource personnel, and management over the coming years. Event topics provide cutting-edge insights needed to succeed in addressing these challenges, including Connecticut's new FMLA law. One of the featured panel sessions focused on the hiring of the justice involved population.

WHICH APPLICANT WOULD YOU MOST LIKELY HIRE?



POLLING RESULTS FROM CBIA'S CONFERENCE

CT REENTRY ROUNDTABLE MEETING SCHEDULE

CITY	DAY	TIME
BRIDGEPORT	3 rd Thursday	9:00am - 10:30am
DANBURY	4 th Wednesday	10:00am - 11:00am
HARTFORD	1 st Thursday	1:00pm - 3:00pm
NEW BRITAIN	2 nd Tuesday	2:00pm - 3:30pm
NEW HAVEN	3 rd Wednesday	11:00am - 1:00pm
SOUTHEASTERN CT	3 rd Friday	10:00am - 12:00pm
STAMFORD	2 nd Thursday	10:00am - 11:00am
TORRINGTON	4 th Thursday	12:00pm - 2:00pm
WATERBURY	1 st Tuesday	9:00am - 10:30am
WINDHAM REGIONAL	3 rd Tuesday	1:00pm - 3:00pm

STAMFORD REENTRY ROUNDTABLE CHAIRS

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ROUNDTABLES, RESOURCES, AND UPCOMING EVENTS, VISIT WWW.CTREENTRY.ORG

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION, VISIT THE FRIENDS AND FAMILY LINK AT WWW.CT.GOV/DOC