

EMPLOY Program

A job can change a life

Overview

Created in 2006, the EMPLOY Program is a voluntary employment service program providing work readiness and job search preparation for incarcerated individuals. Program services are available in all 10 Minnesota Correctional Facilities. Interested individuals must have at least four 4 months on their sentence and no more than 24 months to release and one of the following within the last five years of their sentence: six months of positive MINNCOR Industry or Food Service facility work assignment within, or four months of positive participation or completion of a Career Technical Certification Program. Lifers may also apply as their mandatory minimum approaches.

EMPLOY values increasing employment outcomes and reducing recidivism. Our mission is to reduce recidivism by providing participants with the necessary tools to locate, gain, and retain employment. This is accomplished through offering work readiness and job search training, connecting skilled participants with appropriate job leads, offering follow up support, and encouraging positive change. At the same time, EMPLOY provides education to employers about creating fair chance hiring practices within their company and the benefits of hiring justice-impacted individuals.

EMPLOY prepares participants for an effective reentry into the world of work and ensures they are successful with job retention, thus helping employers fill the employment void left by low unemployment rates and high job vacancies.

Pre-Release Services

During incarceration, participants will access a software called Career Edge to work on job search preparation assignments independently to increase their level of work readiness for obtaining employment post-release. These assignments include, getting to know yourself, managing change & your attitude, planning your future, and other topics that aid in reducing or eliminating obstacles to gaining employment. Additionally, participants receive one to two days of job search training within their last four months of incarceration. The job search training topics include, but are not limited to resume writing, how to conduct an online job search, identifying and matching skills to job interests, interview strategies, answering the conviction questions, mock interviewing and more.

Post-Release Services

Once in the community, participants will work individually with a retention specialist to develop a job search plan and participate in follow-up meetings. All participants receive a physical or an electronic resume, specific job leads based on interests, skills, training, availability, and referrals to community partners for additional training, services, or educational opportunities. Post-release follow-up meetings occur within two weeks of release, at 1 month, then every three months up to 12-months post-release. These follow-up meetings may occur in person, virtually, by phone, email, text messaging, etc.

Employer & Community Partner Engagement

Given that there are fewer unemployed individuals than there are job openings in Minnesota, employers are currently experiencing difficulties filling job openings and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. The EMPLOY job developer works with employers statewide to help identify their workforce needs, desired qualifications, and training and certification requirements. EMPLOY staff also discuss hiring practices, marketable skills, experience of specific candidates, and informs employers about the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Federal Bonding Employer Incentives.

A database is used to organize job leads gained through relationships built with employers and is accessible to EMPLOY staff that are working with individuals on their job search efforts post-release.

Additionally, relationships with community partners throughout the State increases opportunities for released individuals to gain access to the programming and services that will benefit them the most based on their job interests and skills needed for their success.

*Employment Outcomes**

- Those who completed the program were 281% more likely to gain employment.
- Participants found higher-paying jobs, but only when they completed the program.
- Participants in EMPLOY earned about 34% more in total wages. When participants completed the program, their total wages increased to around 86%.

Recidivism Reduction*

Participation in EMPLOY has lower rates of all four types of recidivism: rearrest, re-conviction, re-incarceration, and revocation.

- 9% lower risk of re-arrest
- 30% lower risk of re-conviction
- 46% lower risk of re-incarceration for a new felony
- 37% lower risk of supervised release revocation

These benefits were stronger among those who completed EMPLOY.

- 27% lower risk of re-arrest
- 43% lower risk of re-conviction
- 59% lower risk of re-incarceration
- 66% lower risk of supervised release revocation

Further Information

For further information, contact the EMPLOY Program at EMPLOYProgram.DOC@state.mn.us.

**A Long-Term Follow-Up Evaluation of an Employment Assistance Reentry Program, Author Susan McNeeley, Ph.D. Minnesota Department of Corrections Senior Research Analyst*