



**Project Summary of Operations and Outcomes
February 2006 – November 2006**

This document summarizes the first 10 months of New Careers Project operations from February 2006 to November 2006. In January and February the project furnished and equipped the project site, hired the last two project team members and began recruitment and interviewing of candidates. This summary presents statistics and narratives that reflect the project’s accomplishments, challenges and lessons learned in its pilot year of operation. The summary is organized in 8 sections: Orientation, Enrollment & Case Management; Transitional Jobs; Employment and Training; Identity Documents; Drivers License Suspension and Reinstatement; Civil Legal Matters; Housing; Health and Outlook for 2007.

In 2006, 132 returnees were referred or found their way to New Careers and were preliminarily interviewed. Fifty or 37.8% of these candidates returned to complete the *intake* interview and were scheduled for *orientation*. Of the 50 who were scheduled, 45 (90%) started the orientation process (5 failing to show up for the start of orientation). Thirty-eight (84%) completed orientation and were *enrolled* in the project. Candidates who were referred to the project and who, for any reason, did not return for the intake interview were provided with a range of services including counseling, advocacy with entitlement agencies, help obtaining identity documents, referral letters, information and open invitations to return.

Orientation, Enrollment & Case Management

<u>Intake and Orientation</u>	
Preliminary Screenings	132
Scheduled for Orientation	50
Orientation no-shows	5
Orientation Starters	45
Orientation dropouts	2
Orientation Completion & Enrollment	43

Orientation & Enrollment

Persons referred to the project complete a *preliminary* interview with a member of the Project Staff who reviews candidates’ residence, criminal justice history, employment profile and sobriety. Most importantly, the staff tries to insure that candidates’ presenting needs are not beyond the project’s capacity to address them effectively. Interviewers

affirmatively seek to screen candidates into the project rather than screen them out. They assess the candidate's motivation for lifestyle change and commitment to earning a living through work in the legitimate economy. Candidates who meet the gross project criteria are invited back for a more thorough *intake* interview. Candidates are not considered actually *enrolled* in the project until they complete the 5-day *orientation* with 100% attendance and full participation.

Case Management

Case management begins with the first screening interview by case managers and continues at varying levels of intensity throughout participants' involvement with the project. Involvement can range from attending regular counseling and activities at the project site to periodic telephone check-ins.

Primary case management services are assessment and the development of a service plan; counseling; problem-solving coaching; advocacy; and crisis intervention. Case managers also provided crisis intervention, advocacy and one-time-only services to 16 persons who requested specific help but who were either inappropriate for or not seeking participation in the project. In 2006, the project opened 43 cases. As of January 1, 2007 there were 20 active cases.

Transitional Jobs

Clients assigned to Transitional jobs	40
Terminated from transitional job	4

Forty enrollees were assigned to transitional jobs upon completion of orientation. Thirty-six were assigned transitional jobs at First Occupational Center of New Jersey (OCNJ) and 4 worked at other transitional jobs.

Access to a limited number of transitional job slots severely curtailed project *enrollment* in 2006. The project never had more than 15 transitional job slots available for participants at one time during the first year of operation. The project experimented with assigning participants to less structured transitional jobs than those provided at OCNJ, and with moving participants directly to job search after orientation. The results were varied but largely unsatisfactory. Typically, participants who are released after long prison terms or who have limited work experience benefit significantly from the structure, attention and supervision that transitional jobs provide. The self-discipline, time management skills and social supports needed to win and keep a job in a competitive market are typically underdeveloped or eroded by street life and prison confinement.

During the first months of operation, the Project Staff noted that after 3-4 weeks in transitional jobs, participants tended to become comfortable and began to integrate the routine, relationships and the income of the transitional job into their lives. Some began to lose their focus on the greater goal of finding permanent employment and became resistant to participating in the project's employment activities. Project Staff moved to offset this tendency by emphasizing the purpose and temporary nature of transitional jobs during orientation and intensifying job readiness activities during orientation to reinforce the message that the goal is transition to permanent jobs.

New Jersey Institute for Social Justice is pursuing promising negotiations with potential new partners who will be able to provide the transitional job slots needed for the project to double its enrollment in the second year of operations.

Employment and Training

Job Interview Referrals	34
client-developed job interviews	10
Direct job placements	10
Indirect job placements	5
Job Losses	9
Engagements in VocTrng or Higher Ed	5

A total of 15 job placements were made in 2006. Three participants were placed multiple times making the total number of participants placed 13. This number represents 40% of project enrollees. Five participants elected to pursue higher education or vocational training in addition to or instead of full-time permanent employment. These participants were successfully engaged in vocational training and college programs in 2006. The project job placement goal for 2007 is 65%-70%. The industries in which placements were made were primarily warehousing and light manufacturing. In 2007 target industries include Industrial laundries, auto parts, plumbing, electrical and building supplies. Of the 13 participants placed in jobs (directly or indirectly), 9 were either dismissed from or resigned from their jobs within 90 days. Of that 9, two were placed in a second job within 30 days of loss of the first job. One of the 2 people who were placed a second time was laid off from the second job within 30 days and was placed a third time. This participant was subsequently arrested and confined for a technical parole violation and discharged from project participation.

Twenty-five participants left the project without obtaining jobs for reasons that include unexplained voluntary disengagement, decisions to pursue independent job search, decisions to pursue goals other than employment (e.g., education or vocational training), catastrophic family events, parole violation, arrest & incarceration on new charges and one death.

Through intensive follow-up efforts, project staff was successful in determining the whereabouts of all participants who disengaged themselves from the project either by direct contact with the participant or by contacting family members, other service providers, or criminal justice supervisors.

Identity Documents

NJ MVC Identification Cards	15
Social Security Cards	4
Birth Certificates	4

The Project facilitated acquisition of NJ Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) personal identity cards for 15 participants; social security cards for 4 participants; and birth certificates for 4 participants.

People are routinely released from correctional facilities without any identity documents other than their NJ DOC release papers. While parole officers are tasked

with helping new parolees obtain identity documents, it is common for people to show up for interviews needing one or more of the documents necessary to be legally employed in New Jersey. Before sending participants out to issuing agencies to apply for documents, Project Staff members brief participants on the agencies' procedures. Project Staff frequently advocate on participants' behalf to facilitate successful outcomes with issuing agencies and the project routinely paid application fees out of a fund reserved for this kind of necessity.

Drivers License Suspensions and Reinstatement

DL Suspension Interviews	17
Telephone Inquiries to MVC	22
Abstracts Obtained	5
Number of clients with suspended drivers licenses	29
Suspension-related Court Appearances	5
Number of court responses to outstanding DL matters	9
Number of fines paid or contributed to	5
LRP Enrollments	1
Drivers Licenses Reinstated	3

Only 3 of 45 project candidates had a valid drivers' license at *interview*. Twenty-nine candidates had suspended licenses for a range of reasons including drug ("CDS") convictions. All 29 had fines, fees and/or surcharges outstanding. In some cases the amounts were significant. Ten had no suspensions or fines and 3 people disengaged from the project before their driver's license situations could be assessed.

The Project Staff makes an affirmative effort to help each participant understand his or her driver license status and develop a plan to qualify for restoration of driving privileges. Possession of a valid driver's license substantially improves the employment prospects of any New Jersey job seeker. It is even more important to persons returning from prison because so many of the best paying entry level jobs require a license.

Once an abstract of the driving record is obtained or a call to MVC is made, the participant may have to respond to outstanding warrants and summonses in several jurisdictions. Project Staff encourage participants to appear on outstanding warrants, request payment plans that are within their means.

Two participants acquired first-time driver's licenses with the help of New Careers staff. Project staff helped 3 participants to get their suspended licenses reinstated. One of these was through the Essex Vicinage License Reinstatement Program, a pilot court program designed to address license suspension as a barrier to employment. The Project committed funds towards the procurement of 4 of these licenses. The rest of the participants have not acquired their licenses because of large outstanding fines and lengthy payment plans or lack of motivation to have their driving privileges restored.

Civil Legal Matters

Civil matters returned to court	4
Other matters resolved out of court	5

Four participants went to court on civil matters. Issues included outstanding motor vehicles violations for which warrants were issued by municipal courts; child support orders; identity theft; loan defaults and erroneous background reports. Project staff took detailed reports from participants and either contacted court administrators, attorneys or other advocates qualified to provide participants with advice and guidance on their specific issues.

Housing

Clients requiring transitional housing	1
Success in locating transitional housing	1
Clients who made transition to independent living	8

New Careers requires that applicants be living in safe, relatively stable housing situations at the time of intake. This is an important criterion because the project currently has no capacity to settle homeless applicants in appropriate housing, due to the lack of transitional housing or any other affordable housing pipeline in the Greater Newark area. Stable housing is ultimately a prerequisite to a successful job search and success on the job. Shelters are typically unsafe, tend to have house rules that limit residents’ access during the day and do not otherwise respond to varying work hours and do not provide a way of collecting phone messages from prospective employers.

Most project participants reported to project staff during preliminary and intake interviews that they were living with family members. However, it is understood that many of these are low income households that are already overcrowded and further burdened by the arrival of an additional adult who is not able to contribute money toward expenses. It is common for family relationships to begin to degrade within 3 months after returnees join the household, necessitating their removal to another living situation. Such abrupt moves are disruptive to participants’ job attendance and threaten their continued employment, whether they are in transitional or permanent jobs. Therefore, once participants are placed, project case managers try to insure that participants’ housing can remain stable for at least 90 days after employment.

At intake, more than half of participants state a goal of renting a room or apartment for themselves as soon as possible and living on their own. In 2006, 8 participants made transitions to independent living situations.

Health

Reports of Chronic conditions at Intake	10
Post intake reports of chronic illness	3
Post enrollment Injury/illness	2
Clients referred for medical services	3
Number of clients receiving medical screenings	4

National public health studies have shown that the incarcerated population is a prime vector for a number of chronic and infectious illnesses, including HIV/AIDS, hepatitis

C, hypertension and diabetes. Substandard prison healthcare is a national problem and New Jersey's prison healthcare is no exception to the national norm. More than 50% of New Jersey's prison population is between the ages of 34 and 54 and more than 60% of the population is African American. People being released closely reflect these demographics, placing them at a high level of statistical risk for chronic health issues. Prisoners diagnosed with chronic illnesses while in prison are usually provided with medications to control their disease while they are confined but they are released with only a two weeks' supply of medications and no prescriptions. Prison healthcare does not usually provide aggressive treatments, complicated therapies or surgery except in emergencies. During preliminary and intake interviews, project staff attempt to assess candidates' health care needs and encourage all candidates to have a thorough medical exam if they have not had one in the preceding year. Candidates' typically urgent focus on employment limited the number taking advantage of this opportunity.

In 2006, 10 project participants (20%) reported chronic medical conditions at intake and an additional 3 participants reported such conditions to the Project Staff at some point after enrollment. The project arranged medical care for 3 participants who reported serious or chronic conditions when they enrolled and arranged complete medical screenings for 4 others. The project arranged medical care for 3 participants who were injured or who became seriously ill while they were involved with the project. Principal medical providers were NESF's Community Health Center, Beth Israel Hospital and UMDNJ.

Outlook for 2007

As of March 23, the project has enrolled an additional 7 participants and made an additional 9 job placements.

New Careers is currently pursuing a comprehensive public-private job development campaign targeting high-demand, low-barrier industries and agencies. This approach to securing sufficient job slots for our participants has already produced positive results. On the public side, the City of Newark has agreed in principle to provide transitional jobs for New Careers participants that will help fulfill the Mayor's pledge to revitalize blighted Newark neighborhoods. On the private side, as detailed above, select industries have demonstrated a willingness to employ New Careers participants and, accordingly, staff are now finalizing placements with receptive businesses within these targeted industries (fresh produce wholesalers, plumbing supply companies, electrical and building supply companies, and food service providers at institutions of higher education).

Regarding supplemental services to address the most acute population risk factors that we have identified, New Careers is implementing a two-pronged operational strategy: 1) designing a set of discrete, issue-targeted program elements consisting of coordinated counseling, case management, and workshops to empower our participants to navigate the challenges they face around housing, mental health, and substance abuse; and 2) initiating a 'reentry services providers working group' to strengthen the Project's referral network to meet these issue-specific needs in a timely fashion by leveraging existing resources in the greater Newark community.