

Court & Community

An information series about U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services

Employment for Persons Under Supervision

A Key to Successful Supervision

Employment is a standard condition the court sets for a person's release to the community. The condition requires that the person under supervision work at a lawful occupation unless excused by the officer for school, training, or other acceptable reasons.

Providing persons with the means to earn a living wage is a key to success during the period of supervision and beyond. Research suggests a significant link between employment and a positive supervision outcome. Research also suggests that as income increases, likelihood of failure decreases. People who are gainfully employed are less likely to commit crime. They are more likely to pay any fines and restitution ordered by the court. They are more likely to support themselves and their families and pay taxes.

The Challenge of Finding and Keeping a Job

Finding and keeping a job may be a challenge for someone who either has been convicted of a crime and is reentering the community after serving time in prison or who has been charged with a crime and is awaiting trial.

The obstacles these individuals may face are numerous and complex. They may lack the education or skills required to get a job. They may find that the law bars them from holding a particular job because of their criminal record. They may lack the decision-making and conflict-resolution skills necessary to keep a job.

Low intellect or mental disability may hamper their ability to perform in the workplace. Their communities may offer only limited employment opportunities.

Employers may be reluctant to hire them because of their criminal backgrounds and lack of work experience. Employers may not be willing to offer them flexibility in their work schedules to satisfy the conditions the court set for their release, such as obligations to meet with their officers, get treatment, or appear in court.

These individuals may object to the constraints of supervision and lack motivation to change. They may

Gainfully Employed

Alberta is a high school dropout serving a term of supervised release for aiding and abetting money laundering. With the help of a job coach and a job-readiness program, she gets a commercial driver's license and lands a position as a municipal bus driver—a significant improvement over her previous fast-food jobs.

Philip, a former police officer, is on supervision for distribution of cocaine. Attending school with the help of a vocational rehabilitation program, he finds work as a carpenter apprentice and regains the means to support his family.

U.S. probation and pretrial services officers supervise persons like Alberta and Philip who are released to the community by the federal courts and the U.S. Parole Commission.

Officers protect the community by reducing the risk that these persons will pose a threat to society. They monitor the activities and behavior of these individuals and direct them to services in the community to help them. Ensuring that these persons find and keep a job is an important part of what officers do.

be struggling with complicated circumstances in their lives, including substance abuse or poor health. They may be without the means to fulfill the basic needs—such as food, housing, transportation, and child care—they would need to address before taking on a job.

Despite the considerable challenges, many persons under supervision want to turn their lives around. They have supportive

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families and friends and goals for a better future. Fortunately for these individuals, many employers are willing to give them a chance and help them get back on their feet—as long as they are reliable, willing to learn, and willing to work hard.

The Officer's Role

As part of their duties, officers keep tabs on the employment-related activities of persons under supervision and make sure they use the resources available to them.

Officers verify the job-seeking efforts of these persons. They make sure that the jobs these persons take do not present temptation or opportunity to commit crime and thus pose a threat to other people or the community (such as a convicted embezzler taking a job in a bank). Officers also verify that persons under supervision are working by contacting these individuals at their job sites, reviewing their pay stubs, and keeping in touch with their employers.

Officers also look for any warning signs that employment is not going well. Does the person fail to report for work on time or at all? Lose jobs or change jobs frequently? Maintain a lifestyle inconsistent with his or her income? If so, officers step in, investigate, and address any problems.

All of the officer's supervision activities are designed to increase the chance that the person under supervision will complete supervision successfully. If these individuals are to meet family and financial obligations, pay taxes, and stay on the right side of the law, employment is vitally important.

Officers truly can make a difference by helping people find meaningful employment—not just any job, but a job that fits their abilities and enables them to live as productive members of the community.

Resources and Assistance

A critical part of the supervision duties of officers is to build relationships with people in the community who can help persons under supervision find and keep jobs.

Officers develop partnerships with a wide spectrum of organizations and individuals who can help with employment and related needs. These include federal agencies, community nonprofit and faith-based organizations, local and state employment and education services, local chambers of commerce, and employers.

Community resources are invaluable in preparing persons under supervision for the workforce. They provide an array of services, bear the costs of these services, and address many different needs. These resources provide the following services and more:

- › Assess talents, skills, and interests.
- › Provide job training and career guidance.
- › Conduct workshops to address how to search for a job, prepare a resume, fill out a job application, dress for an interview, and answer questions about criminal history.
- › Offer literacy programs that teach how to read and write English.
- › Provide case management and follow-up services to boost job retention.
- › Assist with basic needs, including clothing, transportation, health care, and child care.

Officers join forces with city and state authorities to sponsor job fairs for persons on supervision. They team up with employment specialists at Federal

Bureau of Prisons halfway houses to address employment before persons are released from prison and collaborate with the Bureau of Prisons and the U.S. Department of Labor to help inmates transition from prison to the community through placement in vocational and apprenticeship programs.

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Officers conduct job readiness training to supplement services provided by community resources. To prepare persons under supervision for employment, they coach them in how to make informed decisions about job opportunities, educational and training requirements, licensing and bonding requirements, working conditions, and career paths. They also work with employers to explain the advantages of hiring persons under supervision, such as state tax incentives and the federal bonding program.

Tools and training improve officers' ability to help persons under supervision with employment. Officers use the Internet to visit job banks and to find job openings, details about careers, and labor market information. They keep informed of changes in technology and business practices and shifts in demands for goods and services. They develop resource guides with helpful information about education, employment, housing, community services, and financial assistance. Some officers take workforce development training to become better at matching individuals with job opportunities.

