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SECTION 188:

# A SECOND CHANCE AT INCLUSION: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, WORK, AND RE-ENTRY AFTER INCARCERATION

(1288-005)

>> KRIS PALMER: Hi. Welcome, everyone, to our webinar A Second Chance at Inclusion: People with Disabilities, Work, and Re‑entry after Incarceration. We are happy that you're here today joining us. This is hosted by the LEAD Center which stands for Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities.
We are a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or WIOA policy development center of the Office of Disability Employment Policy.
Social Policy Research Associates and the National Disability Institute lead the LEAD Center. Next slide.

I have a few housekeeping issues to bring your attention to. One is that to fully participate we have ‑‑ this is live‑captioned. If you would like to hide captions you can click the live transcript button to find the hide captions button. You can also adjust the caption size under the subtitle settings option.
Alternatively, you may open a captioning web page in a new browser and you can look in the chat to find that link. You can adjust the background color, text color, and font using the drop-down menus at the top of the browser. You can position the window to sit on top of the embedded captioning.
Let's see. If you have any other issues, questions about accessibility, or any other questions of a technical nature, you can go in the chat box and we have a number of staff that are there at the ready to help. If you have any questions about, for all of us as participants and speakers, you can put it in the Q&A. So there's two different places you can go. You can find the little boxes for that Q&A for content, and you can go to chat for anything else. There will also be resourced being posted in the chat. If something comes up about something we are talking about, Caleb is going to be putting that in the chat so you'll find the resources there.
Next question, if you have any ‑‑ I think I just went through that, sorry. Okay. Again, so if you have questions for technical ‑‑ of a technical nature go in chat, and Q&A will be for content.
To kick us off today ‑‑ next slide ‑‑ one more. And today we have we are welcoming Rose Warner who is a Senior Policy Advisor from the Office of Disability Employment Policy or ODEP, from the U.S. Department of Labor. So I'll turn it over to you, Rose.

>> ROSE WARNER: Thanks, Kris. Good afternoon. Happy ADA month. I'm Rose Warner and I'm here on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability and Employment Policy to welcome you to today's webinar. 31 years ago this month President George H.W. Bush signed the American's with Disabilities Act into law. This landmark piece of legislation was founded on four pillars. Full participation, independent living, equality of opportunity, and economic self-sufficiency. Today's webinar will touch on all four of the ADA's pillars. One group of people with disabilities that is not often talked about are those who were formally involved with the justice system. People with disabilities already deal with the stigma of having a disability but for those who were formerly incarcerated the stigma is magnified. Many of these individuals want to work, but finding employment can be extremely challenging.
During our webinar, A Second Chance at Inclusion: People with Disabilities, Work, and Re‑entry after Incarceration, you will hear about two organizations efforts to help formerly incarcerated individuals with disabilities find careers. I would like to thank the LEAD Center for hosting this webinar and for all of our presenters for sharing their knowledge with us today. Additionally, I would like to thank you for being here today and for your interest in this very important topic. I also wanted to let you know about a resource re-released this month, our financial toolkit. This toolkit is needed now more than ever due to the changes caused by COVID-19 that affected the financial situations of many. Regardless of where one is in their employment journey, from preparing for a job to changing jobs or even retiring, this toolkit features resources for everyone. There's a link to this resource in the chat.
We will be taking a deep dive into the financial toolkit during a special webinar on July 27th at 3:00 p.m. eastern. You are all invited to attend. To register please visit the second link in the chat. U.S. secretary of labor Marty Walsh will be giving opening remarks for this webinar. You don’t want to miss it. But to introduce you to our speakers for today's webinar I'll pass it back to Kris. Happy ADA month everyone.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thank you Rose. Just a second plug for the July 27th, the Financial Toolkit. I agree, I think it’s going to be spectacular. So I'm Kris Palmer, I'm the moderator today for this webinar. I'm a senior associate with the Social Policy Research Associates and I'm joined by three other presenters. First is Sharif Brown who hails from Queens, New York, and is the youngest of 19 children. Since he was 18 years old, he's been working with people with disabilities. He relocated to North Carolina in 2015 to work for the Alliance of Disability Advocates where he is currently a Program Manager assisting people transition from Butner Federal Correctional Institute.

Secondly, we are going to hear from Michael Mendoza. At 15, Michael was sentenced to adult prison in an era when the prospect of release was under five percent. California senate bill 260 gave Michael the opportunity to earn his release and after 17 years he was paroled in 2014. Since, he has worked as a Case Manager at the Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice, obtained his college degree, and served as the National Director of #Cut 50 before returning to the Anti‑Recidivism Coalition where he currently is the Director of National Advocacy. He's used his personal experience to help pass bills such as the bill I mentioned prior that prohibits 15-year-old kids from being transferred to adult court. This was upheld recently in California Supreme Court.

Third we will hear from Ivette Gutierrez who will speak about the gap in services for people with disabilities who are reentering workforce upon release. Ms. Gutierrez is an Associate at SPR and who has worked on a number of justice-involved and re-entry evaluations including two related to justice involved young people, Face Forward 3, and the job challenge program. Also linking employment activities prerelease program and Pathways Home and others.
So welcome to the presenters. Next slide. Just tell you a few words on what you will learn today. They ‑‑ our speakers will be focused on practices that support employment and reduce recidivism, returning to incarceration, avenues for partnering and collaboration, inclusion and service gaps, and advocacy and inclusion opportunity. Next slide. Now just a few slides on the context in which we are going to be talking about these issues.
So according to the Prison Policy Institute, over 90% of formerly incarcerated people are working or want to work. Next slide please. About 32% of prisoners and 40% of jail inmates have a disability, this is compared to the population at large where 26% of adults have some kind of disability. So people with disabilities are over-represented in the justice system. Next slide. In terms of scale, millions of people with disabilities are coming home from prisons and jails in need of work and a second chance every year. Now I'm going to turn it over to Sharif to talk about second chances he's facilitating every day with his work in North Carolina. Welcome, Sharif.

>> SHARIF BROWN: Thank you, very much. I appreciate the opportunity to express the need for what we have going on here at ADANC. I appreciate the opportunity to push the envelope forward for re‑entry and especially for individuals that have disabilities. So the agency that I work for is called Alliance of Disability Advocates. We are located in Raleigh, North Carolina. There are five counties that we serve. We serve Wake County, Durham County, Johnston County, Franklin and Orange. Those are the 5 counties that we serve. And we are considered a Center for Independent Living. And what that is, is a nonprofit organization that specializes in giving free services for individuals that have disabilities, seniors, and veterans. We are federally funded which allows us to give all of the resources and services for free. As you can see there, that's how we are currently constructed with a few other people that are not in that picture. But the great thing about being a Center for Independent Living as you can see is that we offer independent living skills that include travel training, it can include budgeting, it can include learning how to cook, self‑care, anything except showering and grooming. We offer connections to housing, and employment, clothing, food, benefits advisement, and that's for any individual that is currently receiving SSI or SSDI and they want to work and they're not sure how that's going to affect their check, we have certified specialists on staff that can help them with their benefits. We offer behavioral and mental health supports or connections. And the greatest thing that we have, we have peer support.

Due to the fact that one of the requirements for a CIL, a Center for Independent Living, is that 51% of the staff have to have a disability and then 51% of our board of executives has to have a significant disability so we have individuals with disabilities helping other individuals with similar disabilities.
Next slide, please. Essentially at ADANC one of the main things we have to do is transition and I'll get into that in a second. So what we offer is positive support non‑punitive. Essentially, we are dedicated in meeting an individual where they are. There are no consequences for individuals that enroll in our re-entry program and it's all about positive support. The greatest thing is that we were able to incorporate and give birth to a phrase called an IRP, which stands for an individualized re-entry plan. And with that plan I was able to go into Butner Federal Compound, which is a federal prison here in North Carolina, that houses over 3,000 inmates and is essentially five prisons in one and with the IRP system that I incorporated my recidivism rate was only two percent out of the 200 that I assisted – and so it's proof positive that the re‑entry system that is in prison right now is lack luster and right now at ADANC we are really transcending what everybody else is doing. So we have pre- and post-release services which I alluded to. We have the opportunity, before COVID hit obviously, to go into the prisons and assist individuals with job trainings with mock job interview skills, with sometimes learning how to read in certain situations and essentially preparing them for their transition back into society. And now we are able to offer full wrap around services because of the peer support model that we have. We have two certified peer support specialists, one with actual lived experience of being incarcerated to help the individuals with their transitions once they are released.
We have connections through second chance employers and what that is, is actual proven employers that are not apprehensive to giving second chances to individuals that have felonies or coming out of incarceration. Like I said we have support from our peers. We have certification letters from Butner that essentially gives a lot of praise to ADANC and the re‑entry program and the whole independent re-entry plan philosophy that we are pushing forward. Right now, we have connections with motor vehicles, we connect individuals with vital records, that can be birth certificates or replacement of Social Security cards which we all know are essential when it comes to re‑entry and identification. We give them information and connections to SNAP, we give information to SSI and SSDI. And this information is not just low‑cased and based and targeted in North Carolina. We also have other connections to other agencies and resources across the United States. Next slide, please.
Our partnerships and funders, like I said we are a Center for Independent Living so health and human services funding. We are currently working on a state grant with the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities who saw the model that we were using on the federal level and gave us a grant to work this on the state level as there is a high number of individuals that self‑identify by having either an intellectual disability or developmental delay while they're incarcerated so we are working on trying to assist them with their transition with the independent individualized re—entry plan to assist them with what they need to make their re‑entry successful. Due to the fact that the program is so successful, probation and parole has also reached out to us, and they are also sending us referrals to help them with their individuals.
And, of course, as a Center for Independent Living, we are partners and providers for re‑entry services and employment organizations. We have connections to VR which is Vocational Rehabilitation but obviously we are trying to extend our reach to other employment networks which is why I'm here. Next slide, please.
Our hopes in the future is obviously we want to connect more of the disabled population and our re‑entry communities with positive supports. Re-entry isn't just based on the individual getting out, it's based on the community they're going into. We have to have communities that are going to be acceptable for individuals coming in and are not going to be biased to give individuals second chances, honest second chances, for their re-entry. For instance, for most individuals, people that don't know, in Butner there's over 1,800 individuals that get released into North Carolina and out of that 1,800, at least 40% of them have a disability. So this just goes to show you that there's an extreme need for employment needs and everything else like that. And obviously we are trying to do a larger scale program to reach more individuals across the United States and we are trying to tailor our services with work force and development programs that are going to include individuals that have a disability and are also based upon re-entry. Next slide, please.
And that's all for me so I will pass it on. Thank you, very much. I appreciate everybody.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thank you so much, Sharif. And I just want to remind everyone if you have any questions for Sharif, there will be time for that and you can put those in the Q&A section and then we'll be directing those back to the speakers. So now we will hear from Michael Mendoza. Take it away.

>> MICHAEL MENDOZA: Thank you, Kris. And hi, everyone, once again my name is Michael Mendoza and I'm the Director of National Advocacy with the Anti‑Recidivism Coalition based in California. Our organization does several things, one we provide direct services not only in Los Angeles, California, where we are headquartered, but also in Sacramento, California. Direct services range from life skills, trauma informed care, therapy, and especially job placements and educational opportunities. We also provide support and advocacy network. We provide formerly incarcerated individuals the opportunity to advocate for policy change which provides opportunities to civically engage with their elected officials, and pro-actively make a commitment to their communities and public safety. Next slide, please.
We’ve been founded since 2013 by a dear friend and now board member Scott Budnick who is a Hollywood producer. Many of you may remember movies such as the Hangover series that he produced but then changed his career and gave his life to these issues that provide help and resources to people who are incarcerated at a very, very young age. And since 2013 we’ve learned some of the best practices that have helped us not only upon re‑entry but really to translate what rehabilitation means to employment.
And what we have learned is that support at every stage of a person's journey from incarceration to release to re‑entry starts on the inside. And as you see this picture highlighted in this slide you'll see our executive director my dear friend Sam Lewis who served more than two decades in prison as a young person. All the individuals there are graduating a class that our hope and redemption team of formerly incarcerated individuals goes back into and teach. Teach life skills, teach re‑entry preparedness, and other important classes that help individuals starting on the inside prepare for re-entry. Most importantly, out of our services is the peer-to-peer support model. We understand first and foremost that people who are formerly incarcerated and successfully re‑entered know first-hand what others who are going through a similar experience need and I, myself, know that as well as Kris kindly mentioned earlier. At the young age of 15 growing up during the mid-1990s, at the age of 15 during the mid-1990s growing up in Southern California I made one of the worst decisions of my life, was tried as an adult, sent to adult state prison and grew up there for about 17 years. Only because of a law that had changed was I able to earn my way home and prove that I was no longer that 15-year-old kid anymore. I've been home for seven years now successfully reintegrating and being able to help my own peers upon re-entry. And I'm not unique to my organization and neither is our Executive Director. But over 70% of our staff are formerly incarcerated with these similar experiences. Part of our direct services, we ensure to provide individual and group mental health services. We have on staff clinical therapists who provide help and trying to address the traumas that we experience upon re-entry, such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Also very critical is the need to learn life skills. There's a huge technical gap to our disadvantaged upon re-entry. The last time I was out in the free world was at the age of 15 and didn't come home until around my mid 30s and so there was definitely a huge learning curve not only for myself but for many men and women who experienced the same gap in life skills. But most importantly trying to address the labels of stigma and trauma. And what I mean by that is most of our issues is to try to ensure that we humanize this population of re‑entry and formerly incarcerated individuals. Our population is used to being known as inmates, ex‑cons, former criminals. These are dehumanizing terms that we are trying to get away from that will also help us engage and transition from rehabilitation to employment. Next slide, please.
But all of that doesn't go without saying that partnerships are very, very, very important. We can't do this on our own as a small nonprofit in California. And so part of our partnerships and success to our work has been universities. Schools that provide opportunities for formerly incarcerated folks programs that will help us navigate the different systems just to even apply to schools, what schools and classes to take, and how to navigate the UC systems. We also have partnerships with government agencies including CalFire, NBC Universal. Our most important programs around the Ventura training center is a program that allows firefighter who were incarcerated in camps fighting fires while they were incarcerated risking their lives just like the other amazing firefighters we have. And upon re‑entry, when they come home, they can now apply to become their EMT license because of the founding record. So we have amazing programs like the Ventura training center program in partnership with CalFire in which CalFire provides the technical training that leads to firefighting employment opportunity, and ARC and our team of formerly incarcerated individuals provides the peer to peer life skill and training supports to encourage and help folks endure the very vigorous training of a CalFire program. We also have other important partnerships that lead towards cohorts and union jobs such as plumbing, electricians and so forth because of our important partnerships with probation and building trades, etcetera. And so Partnerships are very, very key in the success of our population and re‑entry and really being able to translate their rehabilitation into successful careers. Next slide, please. Funders. We desperately need resources in order to make this work happen. We currently serve close to 2,000 formerly incarcerated folks across the state and that means that there are many different people in different counties. California is such a big state. And we need the resources to be able to provide these services.
Resources come from individual donors, private foundations, public grants, and corporate sponsorships. The hardest of these grants to get are public contracts especially federal grants. And most of our resources that we are able to obtain are earmarked. I’m mostly in charge of our policy department. And I’m even always fighting with my own colleagues to ensure which grants we get go to our policy departments and which grants we get go to our direct services departments. And so most of these resources that we do provide unfortunately will go to specific parts of our organization that we desperately need.
Next slide, please.
And so we hope that in the hopes for the future as it relates to a nonprofit organization like ours who provides direct services to people who are formerly incarcerated with many different barriers and needs are that we are able to provide sustainable support not only for the mental health and the trauma at a scale that we experience with such a large population of folks who re-enter, especially in a big state like California, but in hopes to increase WIOA funding and the flexibility of the funding and incentivize organizations like ours and states like California to be able to serve more appropriately those who are returning home. And there are some barriers that even under WIOA funding it's very difficult for an organization.

Selective services or required documents, for example. People come home don't automatically come home with an identification card, we don’t automatically come home with a birth certificate or many other important documentations. For example, I was very, very young going into the system and became of age at 21 missing selective services. It's not an opportunity that people had while they're incarcerated. And upon re‑entry not being able to apply to educational opportunities, before I first had to fix that selective service problem which was very difficult to do and prove being that I was in the system for quite some time.
And so that's a normal barrier that most people face upon re‑entry is a lack of documentation, the missed opportunity of selective services that we as an organization do not penalize people coming home because of the lack of documentation. We still continue to provide these services in hopes that we can receive resources and hopefully make the change for the better. Thank you.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thanks so much, Michael. Now hear from Ivette Gutierrez from Social Policy Research Associates. Take it away, Ivette.

>> IVETTE GUTIERREZ: Hi everyone. So I'll start this off here by talking a little bit about some of the evaluations that we’ve conducted. So we evaluated the reintegration of ex‑offenders, or REXO program, funded by DOL. The second chance act adult demonstration program funded by USDOJ, the implementation of the linking to employment activities pre-release grants also funded by USDOL as well as the evaluation of USDOL grants serving youth offenders, and many, many other evaluations that I won’t mention. And all of these initiatives were aimed at providing employment and supportive services to either currently or formerly incarcerated folks or people with other types of justice involvement whether it be probation or other things. And yet we had no requests to really look at this overlap in populations between justice involved individuals and people with disabilities. And as Kris presented earlier, there is a high overlap in those two populations. And so what the team at SPR did was, we conduct over 40 interviews for this webinar to find out who was doing the work in re‑entry, disabilities and employment services so that little tiny sliver on the Venn diagram in the slide. And the team found that it was really hard to find service providers we were focused in all of these three areas. But we did find the two wonderful organizations here today. But after talking to many service providers in the field, it really prompted the following questions up on the slide. So one, are federal reporting requirements discouraging work force programs from serving re‑entry populations? Two, do re‑entry programs assess disability status? And if so, how do they work or how do they work to make their programs accessible, either programmatically or physically. And then conversely, do disability service providers have the capacity to serve justice‑involved individuals? So we really have those questions or still have those questions in mind as we were putting this webinar together and so I'm excited to have a discussion about those things and other things.
Back to Kris.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thank you so much, Ivette. The Q&A is lighting up. You can't ‑‑ I don't think if you in the audience can see that so many questions are in there but I want to still encourage you to put more questions but I will get started with the questions that we already have. There are ‑‑ looks like many organizations that want to collaborate with ARC and your organization in North Carolina, Sharif. Let me just start with a question for you, Sharif. A couple people are asking, these second chance employers, how do you find them? How do you develop that list of employers that you're able to work with and that are giving people a second chance after incarceration?

>> SHARIF BROWN: That's a fantastic question and I can just say that's by trial and error from working in re‑entry for so long, you accommodate and you provide the support for individuals when they're going on employment opportunities and then you'll get those employers and you'll see the proven records of those employers that will give individuals those second chances. So you add those individuals to that list. And then as you're working with that organization, I can promise you that that organization will know another organization that's also offering the same services or the same second chances for individuals and then you make those connections. And then you just continue to gradually build that resource list. There's not a Google search where you can get the answer to who is giving second chances to employers because you're going to get a general answer that everybody is supposed to be doing this, federally, but behind the scenes I can tell you from lived experience from my consumers that I work with, that a lot of those employers that are saying “yes we are promoting a second chance” are not.

But the great thing that at least is that now that question of have you ever been convicted of a felony has now been removed off of the job applications which is a fantastic step forward to trying to give individuals at least an even playing field when it comes to obtaining employment because I'm pretty sure we all know in years previous once that box was checked, that you've been convicted of a felony, your application then goes in the garbage. It doesn't matter anything that comes after that. So with the advocacy that had that removement and now it is at least trying to compile a list of those employers, then that's how you get that list. But the list that I have they're national employers, not just based in North Carolina. So they can have corporations in other states as well. So that's how I got my list of employers that I know give second chances.

>> KRIS PALMER: Are there any of those big employers that you might share with us that might be in other places?

>> SHARIF BROWN: Sure. Target is a big one. Sears is a big one. Most department stores are really big on second chances. Most, I am not going to say fast food places, but most restaurants will give second chances to individuals. And keep in mind that especially when it comes to individuals coming out with a disability, these organizations that are giving these opportunities for employment are also federally regulated or required to give reasonable accommodations to assist that individual with the disability so that they can maintain that employment. Because sometimes getting the employment is the easy part. And then not being able to fulfill the job duties is always the most difficult one which then gives the employer the out to fire that individual.
So now with the advocacy of these reasonable accommodations in conjunction like I said with the removal of that question on the application, the opportunities for individuals second chances and disabilities to gain substantial employment fortunately now is on the rise.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thank you, Sharif. Thank you. Anything you want to add to that, Michael, in terms of second chance employers and anything ‑‑ I know ARC also does services ‑‑ provides employment services. And I wonder if you might comment on how your organization reaches out and establishes those relationships.

>> MICHAEL MENDOZA: Yeah, great question. And I mean, my colleague, Sharif, answered it amazingly. The only thing I would be able to add as it relates to our organization is that our board members and our executive director do a great job networking and using the power of our partnerships that we do have to extend out to CalFire, probation, even folks such as NBC universal. But I think what most importantly allows us to create successful partnerships is bringing folks that are directly impacted to the table in these conversations that have successfully gone through re‑entry. Most of the time people just need their hearts and minds changed because of the negative stereotypes that most people already have in mind about formerly incarcerated people. And until they have that face-to-face conversation to see and kind of get away from any fears that they may have of partnering or even hiring individuals with felony records. Partnerships really don’t flourish until there is that heart to heart conversation. So I will definitely make sure and recommend that people are directly impacted are part of those conversations.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thanks, Michael. Michael, I have another question for you. Speaking about helping people find work and getting connected to employers, I just wonder if you might speak to where are -- in terms of partnering with American job centers a lot of people joining us today are people who are in this ‑‑ doing similar work and trying to connect people to jobs. Some are American job center people, American job centers working. I just wonder what are some of the opportunities that you've seen for ARC to connect with AJC's and what are some of the limitations and challenges that you've seen in terms of really being able to provide the services to people coming ‑‑ re‑entering when it comes to partnering with HACC's?

>> MICHAEL MENDOZA: I think with any partnership for re‑entering the re‑entry population, I think and I'll just ‑‑ and thinking back to my own experience barely coming home around seven years ago it was really difficult to trying to find any agency, any kind of help from people that could relate to my experience and be able to translate everything I've learned what the programs I used while I was incarcerated to rehabilitate and really kind of in a sense translate that to employable skills. It's not easy to do when most of my programming may have been teacher's aide with computer class skills inside of a prison or maybe just educational courses in life skills. There's no way of being able to translate that upon re‑entry in any level unless you do have people who have been through those situations and have successfully come home that now recognize how to translate what rehabilitation looks like and how folks can get into job trainings with that.

So I guess what I'm trying to say is for us the peer-to-peer model is very, very important and what I would recommend for any partnership is to connect with organizations that have formerly incarcerated individuals working there that understand what the direct needs are because a lot of the times it's really ‑‑ it's not just a one size fits all. We can put people re‑entering from prisons and society to any kind of job. It doesn't work that way unfortunately because of disabilities, because of traumas, because of the lack of life skills. So I just really would recommend the networking opportunities and even hiring formerly incarcerated people in your own organizations or within your own work that can help kind of translate what this population needs.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thank you, Michael.

>> SHARIF BROWN: I'm back. My cat knocked my Wi‑Fi out so I apologize (laughter).

>> KRIS PALMER: I'm sorry. That put me into “I'm not a cat.” Okay. I don't know if you saw that. (Laughter) Sharif, I have a question for you, welcome back. Michael was just telling us some of the challenges and limitations and opportunities to partner with American job centers. As you know we have a lot of people on our webinar today that work in job centers. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about what are some of the limitations and challenges in partnering, and what would it take to do that?

>> SHARIF BROWN: I don't think that there will be any kind of limitational challenges especially with my agency because we are always looking to partner especially when it comes to employment because one of the two major barriers with re-entry especially with individuals with disabilities one of them is always going to be employment and the other one is going to be housing. So if we have the opportunity to partner with employment networks to maybe make that transition into employment easier, there will be no barriers as far as that goes.

The only limitation I would say would probably be location because obviously we are in North Carolina and I know there's people around the country watching this webinar. So obviously -- we will not turn down any partnership with any employment network anywhere in the United States because like I alluded to in the presentation we have justice‑involved individuals that are being released across the United States. So it will always be a fantastic resource to have an employment network in as many states applicable that we are sending individuals to. So with our agency I don't foresee any push back or any kind of problem with a partnership at all.

>> KRIS PALMER: Okay. Thank you, Sharif. I have one here for Ivette. Given you've done so many evaluations and worked in this space, what does it take to do the in‑jails work force services well?

>> IVETTE GUTIERREZ: Sure. And I also saw a similar question come in in the Q&A so hopefully I can answer both of them. So I'll share a little bit about what we learned in our LEAD study which was a study that included 22 jail sites around the country that were providing both prerelease and post release services. And I think one thing that we learned is that the setup is really important. And by the set up I mean the close collaboration between the service agency and the facility. And so there needs to be early and frequent and on-going communication to kind of help bridge any cultural differences and create buy-in among facility or jail administrators and staff. And that buy‑in is going to be crucial for recruitment getting people into your program pre-release, getting people in scheduling, because they hold you know the schedules, they hold the space that you can work in. It's also going to be crucial for transition work. They know when people are going to be released. Sometimes -- there's not a lot of warning but they do know that.

And so I think that pre or early set up piece is really important when working in a facility. And I think also just being really flexible when they're changing conditions in jails or in facilities. Sometimes, what we saw in the study was that instruction periods would get cut short or they would get canceled, classes would get canceled because of security concerns. And so trying to be really flexible in covering the most important content early on during pre-release services was really important especially because you didn’t know or the staff didn't know when people were going to be released.

And so I think another important piece, and Michael talked a little but about, is working with specialized service providers so whether it be mental health providers or people who really focus on disability services, that's really important and bringing those people to the table early on as you're creating that buy-in with the facility is important.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thank you, Ivette. There is a related question -- let me actually direct that, a similar question to you, Sharif. How do you get ‑‑ well, let me start. How important is that in-jail service ‑‑ to reach them in ‑‑ before they're released and what kind of services do they need, you know, in jail before they're released?

>> SHARIF BROWN: I would say paramount would be an understatement. But people have to understand is that 95% of the individuals that are incarcerated throughout the United States will have a release date and will be coming home at some point. So the great thing about this individualized re‑entry plan that I was discussing that my agency has constructed is that we do go into the prisons and sit down with that individual because most re‑entry services inside of prison are mostly “cookie-cutter”.

So it's going to be generic information that might not even necessarily meet the needs of that individual. So what my agency does is that we go in and we sit down with that individual on a one on one basis to find out what they think they need for their successful re‑entry. And then start bringing in the information and then start giving them the training that they're looking for. Especially if someone is interested in maybe starting their own business because employment as we all know for people with re‑entry is not the best so a lot of individuals that are coming out of prison and I'm pretty sure that my other panelists can attest to this, a lot of individuals are looking at starting their own employment agencies or their own opportunities for employment once they get released so a lot are looking at LLC and how to create and construct and start. So we will bring information on LLC work and how to do things like that.

>> KRIS PALMER: What is an LLC?

>> SHARIF BROWN: Essentially an LLC is a self‑started business for anyone who has a felony.

>> KRIS PALMER: Got it.

>> SHARIF BROWN: Because most individuals might not know just because you have a felony doesn't mean you can't start your own business. It's called an LLC. Individuals will ask for information on that so we will bring that in. For some individuals they have I would say an issue with reading or really aren't as proficient as they should so now we start getting into the independent life skills or the independent living skills like reading, like learning how to budget when you get out, like learning where Faith‑based services are in your community.

Anything that they ask for we construct in the IRP before they get released and everything is laid out for them, how to get SNAP which is food stamps, how to get SSI if they had it before or not, what to expect, how to get employment, how to travel because like my panelists alluded to when you are incarcerated your time stops, the rest of the world keeps going. So there's a great barrier with technology. So we would teach individuals how to use smart phones while they're incarcerated. The difference between the OS's of Apple and Android. So these are all the things we do when we go into the prison.
So that work is essential. Like I said, when we did that work at Butner the state recidivism rate is 45%. People who are enrolled in my re‑entry program and have the benefit of the IRP, the recidivism rate was only two percent. So it – the numbers have to speak for themselves. That right there goes to show you that it is paramount that we can get into these prisons before they get released because once they get released essentially, it's too late.

>> KRIS PALMER: Michael let me ask you the same question with ARC. How important is it to have that connection prior to release for -- to smooth re‑entry?

>> MICHAEL MENDOZA: Very important. We prioritize that in prison support network and services that we offer throughout nine different prisons across the state of California and after this year we will turn into I think about 20 different prisons as even the California budget that was just approved by the governor thankfully will be able to allow us to hire more formerly incarcerated people that can go back inside to provide life skills to provide really an example of what success looks lick when they see their own peers that most of them were incarcerated with now coming back in to share their hope. It's a time for us to build trust with people who are still incarcerated and show them that there are supports that there's a network upon re‑entry that they can trust and really take advantage of. Again, one of the biggest issues while people are still inside is the lack of trust upon re‑entry because of the barriers, because of the stigma, and essentially because of what re‑entry has looked like in the past with recidivism rate that has failed most people but fortunately with organizations like ours and Sharifs and so many others we are able the reduce that recidivism rate with our own support program. So work on the inside is definitely, definitely critical for every organization to begin the process of re‑entry.

>> KRIS PALMER: And let me just ask both of you a question to focus on this disability aspect of this webinar. I just wonder, what was it ‑‑ to what extent is the care around overcoming trauma ‑‑ overcoming mental health issues, why was that something that ARC took on, Michael? Why was that so important and why would that be so important for people working to help people re‑enter and get employed. Why would that be so important?

>> MICHAEL MENDOZA: You know, one of the reasons that we really prioritized hiring a staff of therapists, for several reasons. Obviously people who have done an extensive period of time or even just a day experiencing incarceration, arrest, and all those things will come with trauma whether it's posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety and other issues that make it more difficult upon re‑entry compounded on top of the dehumanizing narrative. Today we are hearing about the rise in crime and how people are uncomfortable with that and unfortunately when people who have committed a crime start to hear those things they're like well there goes our opportunities again.
And so there's just trauma on top of trauma that incarceration imposes on human beings where it becomes very, very critical to provide therapy, to provide these services while at the same time providing life skills, providing job opportunities. It has to go hand in hand when we have a dehumanizing system not just for the people that have committed harm but for their families who are still living in communities and for the victims of crime as well. And so there's a huge need to provide trauma‑informed services especially if you want to ensure that people coming home become productive and law‑abiding citizens where they can know how to cope with all the trauma that’s involved with incarceration.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thank you, Michael. And let me ask you Sharif, relatedly, you're a Center for Independent Living and I know -- I think many may know that are on the call that there's a ‑‑ there are many, many, many CILs, Centers for Independent Living all over the country. So I just wonder if you could say more about you know -- could more CILs be collaborating with organizations that are serving re‑entry populations or could people that are re‑entering get support from their local Centers for Independent Living? I just wonder ‑‑ I know you guys have been pioneers in this. What advice would you give to people that want to partner find more support are start doing these services if they are a CIL?

>> SHARIF BROWN: That's a great question. One of the five core things that we have to do to be a CIL is transitional services. Now, how that is unwrapped is based upon the vision of the board of directors and the executive director and their leadership. Currently right now out of all the CILs across the United States, we are the only CIL that is doing any kind of pre-release and post-release full wrap around transitional services for individuals that are either incarcerated or formerly incarcerated at some point.
So right now we are the only ones that are doing it, so like you said we are pioneering and pushing this forward. As far partnerships go for individuals or organizations that have CILs in their area, I would say just call them up. You can google CIL in whatever state or whatever town that you are in. And I'm not saying there's going to be a CIL that is going to cover every county for every state in the United States. You will find out that there's going to be a grossly under-served population when it comes to CIL disbursement across the United States. However, if you are fortunate enough to have a CIL in your backyard or in one of the counties that you serve, I would say call them and see what they're doing as far as transitional services go. And if they are doing transitional services for individuals that are coming outs of prison then great, call them, partner with them, see what you can do with them.

If that opportunity is not available, my agency we have to provide information and referral services. So even if we get a phone call from an agency or from an individual who is out of state, Alaska or somewhere in the outskirts and things like that, and they just want information on whatever re‑entry services or disability services are in their area we can provide that information to them free of charge. So if there's a CIL in your backyard, call, try to partner with them. If there's not, then I would say try to push for one in your county or in your location and if you cannot do that and you need immediate services and information, then I will say this, contact my agency and we will do the best that we can for you.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thank you, and Rose I would say yes. Rose from the Department of Labor has a contact she's going to put in the chat. Also there's a number of people from a number of different states saying they want help ‑‑ can ADANC help us? So you’re saying first try and go to your local partner – and then also you have resources to share. So I'm going to get more to how available resources later but I do want to reassure everyone that Michael and Sharif's contact information is live‑linked in this presentation. It's available a week from Friday. And also I would encourage Michael and Sharif if you want to go ahead and put your contact information in the chat that's fine now so people don't have to wait that long to see it. But that's very helpful. That's very helpful, Sharif. I guess are there – I wonder Michael, are there any cautions ‑‑ I know as you're serving people coming out of ‑‑ being incarcerated, you had some cautions about there being a stigma. I wonder if you might want to talk more about that. People that are case managing, what are some of the cautions you might give them or encouragement you might give them as they're serving people who are formerly incarcerated?

>> MICHAEL MENDOZA: Thank you, Kris. That’s a great question. Especially as it relates to stigma, when you think about it, I mean I came home not only with the stigma and I'll say it in full transparency which I don't mind, I was arrested for a gang related murder. And to the world it's a really horrible crime, taking the life of another young man. And there's going to be a stigma that's going to be forever attached to that through a felony record. But even if it's not the worst-case scenario just being incarcerated period carries a stigma.

I think I'll just say this last thing, there's something about being able to redefine or look at what does disability and trauma mean? And how do we kind of look at that on a human potential and individual who is already ‑‑ who already has a lot of other stigmas that are associated with the felony record, doing time and so forth. So I think the stigma piece is really important and anyway you can humanize any individuals with people, language first, I think it's just the first step in helping to fill in those gaps from incarceration to employment.

>> KRIS PALMER: Thank you, thank you, Michael. We have so many more questions. I'm so sorry that we are getting close to ‑‑ we have three minutes left so I'm going to walk us through some of our -- some other resources that are available and close us out. But you've really generated a lot of energy here, Michael and Sharif and Ivette, and there's a lot more to talk about. But I think we have our time today so I'm going to help wrap us up here.
So I do want to say thank you so much to all the presenters for this wealth of information and knowledge. And also encourage everyone, they have opened up their contact information and hearts to talk more to you if you want to follow up with anyone here.
So next slide, please. So resources. We did ‑‑ Lorraine Sturdevant and I did a lot of research with the help of Ivette and other people on our staff that are experts, we really – and Laura Aron -- we really dug through a lot of information. And this slide and the next slide are some live links to resources including some stories, information about the organizations our speakers are with, and other kinds of publications you might access. Next slide.
Like you, we have a lot of remaining questions like: how can we expand? ‑‑ it's obviously‑‑ like everyone is saying this is an under-served population and how do we expand these services and be more inclusive and get over ‑‑ get past the stigma? How can support services and resources really be expanded for people who have been justice‑involved? So and how complete is this analysis? We know this is really just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the resources and information we provided today. What else is missing? What are we not considering? I want to encourage you in the small time we have left if you are using resources, let us know who you are, put it in the chat, in the Q&A and we love to know more about what you're doing. Next slide.
So here is the magic slide that tells you where to get these ‑‑ you can get the slides from today, you can get the transcript from today, you can get the recording from today if you want to, you know, have others listen to Michael, Sharif and Ivette you can replay this whole recording for them or parts of the recording for them. And you can go to the LEAD Center website for this PowerPoint but many others. Next slide.
You can follow LEAD and any one of these Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn. There's some of the links. And last slide. So I want to thank you, everyone, for joining the webinar today and especially again to our speakers. Thank you so much. Have a wonderful day, everyone. Bye.

(Webinar concluded at 3:00 p.m. CT)

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