

To: Russ Webb, Chair, Board of Trustees
From: Amanda Lofgren, Program Officer
Date: 2/22/2016
Re: Change of Intent for Department of Labor and Work Force
Development; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Position

MEMO

REQUESTED MOTION:

Approve changing the intent of the FY16 and FY17 MHTAAR grants to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development from the DVR Counselor/Liaison position to the Job Center Liaison in Correctional Facilities position in the amount of \$125,000 for each fiscal year.

BACKGROUND

Staff Introduction:

This proposal is to request a change of intent for funding that was approved by trustees on September 4, 2014, to fund a position within Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) in FY16 and 17 to focus on business engagement. The requested change is to align the role of this position with the Trust, Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Department of Correction's priority on criminal justice reform and reinvestment.

In recognizing the Trust's priorities: Criminal Justice Reform and Reinvestment and Medicaid Reform and Redesign, this is an opportunity to utilize the existing funding for the position within DOLWD to refocus on beneficiaries with criminal history across the state. Program staff had conversations with leadership from both DOLWD and DOC to discuss the position and how to best utilize the position to achieve the ultimate goal of increasing employment outcomes for beneficiaries re-entering the community post incarceration. In addition to talking through the details of the position it was discussed that this will be a joint position with collaboration between DOLWD and DOC.

The original intent of the funding was for this position to serve as the primary point of contact for developing and maintaining business relations so that the needs of businesses can be understood and successfully matched with the knowledge, skills and abilities of Trust beneficiaries ready for employment. This includes developing an extensive understanding of business needs and available pool of job seekers that have appropriate abilities for those openings so the placement is successful.

For multiple reasons there has been delays in implementing this project. However, business engagement is a critical strategy to increase employment outcomes for Trust beneficiaries. This has primarily been done by the development and implementation of the Business Employment Services Team, which is an interagency collaboration between the Departments of Health and Social Services and Labor & Workforce Development, as well as other state and federal agencies dedicated to meeting the workforce needs of Alaska businesses while improving hiring outcomes for individuals with disabilities and veterans. They also have focused on increasing outreach to Society of Human Resource Management and have recently conducted an employer social norms survey to inform a business outreach plan.

Project Description:

Significant efforts are underway to decrease recidivism for Trust beneficiaries and unemployment is identified as a criminogenic risk factor. As part of the planning process for the Employment Initiative, it is

the intention to align with the existing recidivism efforts specific to employment to ensure beneficiaries have employment options to earn a livable wage. In recent communication with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to discuss updates on the employment efforts related to the various recidivism reduction projects, it was discussed how critical it is for beneficiaries to have prevocational services prior to release as well as more coordination between DOC and the local job centers. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development has multiple vocational trainings and it is important to increase coordination to expand programs within DOC. There are also various trades that may be able to do programs within corrections to ensure that upon release, beneficiaries have the skills to qualify for jobs that pay livable wages. Through the various networks that DOLWD maintains, this can also provide linkages between DOC and the reentry coalitions to employers which can ultimately increase pathways to jobs for beneficiaries. Another important component is to ensure that conditions of probation and parole support employment, rather than undermine the individual's success.

Proposed change of intent:

The position would be located in the Division of Employment and Training Services, as an Employment Security Specialist III who coordinates statewide job training and employment placement for returning citizens to support criminal justice reform. This position would directly report to the director of the Employment and Training Services Division, and would work closely with Department of Corrections and Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority staff who are responsible for implementing the Alaska Prisoner Reentry Initiative. This is a lead position that would be assigned to coordinate Job Center services within correctional facilities throughout the state to provide supportive employment services to returning citizens, who primarily are Trust beneficiaries. In addition to ensuring Job Center services are deployed within correctional institutions, this position would coordinate with other employment and training service providers and businesses including but not limited to employers, Regional Training Centers, Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees, Job Corps, and employment coordinators in regional Prisoner Re-entry Coalitions. Key responsibilities would include:

- Coordinate with and establish strong working relationships with the Department of Corrections, Mental Health Trust Authority staff, community Prisoner Re-entry Coalitions, other training providers, employers, and non-profits as appropriate, to ensure returning citizens enter employment as soon as possible after release;
- Work with Job Centers and the Department of Corrections Criminal Justice Planner to place Job Center staff in correctional facilities in order to connect returning citizens with jobs and training opportunities using ALEXsys, Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act resources, other Job Center resources, and provisional/direct hire opportunities with public employers to achieve employment that provides a livable wage;
- Coordinate and advocate with the returning citizens and their probation/parole officers to ensure conditions of supervision are aligned with beneficiaries employment goals to achieve successful employment outcomes;
- Ensure there is a smooth handoff from Job Center services provided within correctional facilities (pre-release) to Job Center and other training/employment services provided outside of prison (post-release) for each inmate;
- Coordinate with Job Centers statewide to ensure Job Center staff have a presence in all correctional facilities and provide pre-release employment and training services to as many reentrants as possible;
- Coordinate with the DOC Criminal Justice Planner, who oversees education programs, to enhance and maximize institutional training and job programs.

Upon approval of this change of intent, DOWLD will move forward with hiring the position to begin as soon as filled.