

Expanding Opportunities



News from the Oakland Private Industry Council

in partnership with the Oakland Workforce Investment Board

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Dear Friends,

We hope this newsletter finds you enjoying the summer season with friends and family.

As you know, all too many of us are out of work and seeking new opportunities. Recently the Oakland Private Industry Council (PIC), in collaboration with EASTBAY Works, implemented a new, state-approved tracking system which makes it easier to register for and use employment services.

Job seekers can now submit resumes into this new system, called the Virtual One Stop, which will automatically match them with job postings. Employers can post job orders and review resumes from applicants. The web-based system means registration can happen at home, at coffee shops, or wherever Internet access is available. We are happy to offer a broad range of online services, including labor market information, skills and interest assessments, and more. Visit www.eastbayworks.com to get started.



Gay Plair Cobb, CEO of the Oakland PIC

I also want to share some other exciting news:

- The PIC was recently honored by the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce for providing high quality services to Oakland residents. **To read more**, visit <http://www.oaklandpic.org/oakland-pic-honored-by-oakland-chinatown-chamber-of-commerce.html>
- Have you visited the Target store on the Oakland-Emeryville border? Earlier this year, the Oakland Career Center, operated by the PIC (on behalf of the Oakland Workforce Investment Board), played a key role in staffing this business. **To read more**, visit <http://www.oaklandpic.org/oakland-career-center-helps-staff-new-target-store1.html>
- We have begun a new partnership with the Alameda County Superior Court, serving parolees referred by the Court for job services. **Read more on page 2.**

Stay tuned for more!

**-Gay Plair Cobb, Chief Executive Officer
Oakland PIC**

PIC Focuses on Reentry Services

With over 13,000 individuals on probation or parole in Alameda County, prisoner reentry is a critical issue for the entire community.

"We know the stakes are high," said Gay Plair Cobb, CEO of the Oakland PIC. "Recidivism is a critical issue in California. It's imperative that, as part of a larger rehabilitation strategy, the PIC is able to provide high quality, comprehensive training and employment services."



**Charles Turner,
Reentry Manager/Community
Services Liaison**

The Oakland PIC is committed to helping formerly incarcerated individuals successfully transition or re-transition after being released. Breaking Through Barriers (BTB) is a PIC program that is designed to assist the reentry population. In BTB, PIC staff work with clients to assess their skills and interests, support their job training efforts, and market themselves to employers.

Another key element of BTB is the PIC's partnership with the Alameda County Superior Court's Parolee Reentry Court Program. Launched in 2010, the reentry court takes a collaborative approach to help people on parole avoid obstacles that may lead to recidivism. Each week a group that includes a judge, lawyers from the public defender and district attorney's offices, parole agents, and case managers meets individually with parolees to track their progress. Reentry Manager/Community Services Liaison Charles Turner and Peer Mentor/Outreach Specialist Louis King, both of whom are PIC staff members, also regularly attend court sessions in order to assist individuals with finding and succeeding in job training.

Turner expects the PIC's involvement in the reentry court will positively impact participants. "The PIC is extremely appreciative of this opportunity to work with such dedicated Superior Court staff," he said. "We bring expert knowledge of labor market opportunities to the process, and we also have strong relationships with a variety of support service partners. This partnership between the court and the PIC is helping to reduce recidivism and ultimately change lives."

Robert M. is a reentry court participant and a Breaking Through Barriers client. Since being released from prison last year, he has had a number of challenges to cope with, including needing to overcome a drug addiction and to find stable housing and employment. "My parole officer gave me an ultimatum one day," Robert recalled. "I'd been living in motels and basically going nowhere since leaving prison. He told me that I had to get my act together."

Robert subsequently went through drug rehabilitation and has now been drug-free for several months. He works part-time doing landscaping, lives in transitional housing, and looks forward to obtaining full-time employment in the near future. "What I'm doing now is showing people that I can be consistent, come to work on time and with a good attitude, and get the job done," he said.

He is grateful for the assistance he received from the PIC, including the life lessons provided by Turner and King. "They both helped me a lot," said Robert. "Their support motivated me to make positive changes in my life."

A Conversation about Reentry with Assemblymember Sandré Swanson

Assemblymember Sandré Swanson (District 16) is on the forefront of state legislative efforts to reduce recidivism and increase opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals. He has recently introduced bills that would allow community colleges to offer classes in state prison facilities (AB 216) and help people with a drug felony conviction access basic nutritional assistance (AB 828). He also authored a bill (AB 236) that would provide a \$5,000 net hiring credit to small businesses that hire formerly incarcerated individuals. The Assemblymember, who was named to the Assembly Select Committee on Reentry in 2009, recently spoke with the Oakland PIC. Excerpts from this conversation appear below.



**Assemblymember
Sandré Swanson**

"Once a person successfully serves and completes all of his or her commitments under the law, it is in the state's best interests to implement a strong reentry strategy to help that person transition back into the community safely. Oakland receives a significant number of formerly incarcerated people upon release, so it is vital to the City and its surrounds that our state enact real rehabilitation reform as part of our reentry strategy. This is especially true in light of the U.S. Supreme Court decision to release tens of thousands of prisoners in the next two years."

"Seven out of ten former inmates in California reoffend, at a cost of \$50,000 a year to the state. Our state must decrease its 70% recidivism rate by dealing honestly with its reentry issues through three critical areas: education, jobs, and shelter."

"The more education a person has, the less likely he is to commit a crime. Forty percent of incarcerated inmates have attained less than a high school degree and only 12% have attended college for any length of time. Numerous studies indicate that providing educational opportunities for inmates is the most cost effective prison rehabilitation program and has the greatest impact on reducing recidivism."

"However, education and rehabilitation programs are of little use if there are no jobs available or the community to which the former offender returns refuses to hire him. Our state must provide adequate transition assistance, including necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare, to former offenders. We will not be able to sustain the release of prisoners from the state's correctional facilities over the next two years without assisting their transition through education, rehabilitation, and employment programs."

"Workforce development has to remain a priority in the reentry conversation. The Oakland PIC has been on the front lines of assisting the formerly incarcerated for many years. Oakland also faces the challenge of having a high dropout rate, so the fact that the PIC can provide job training, as well as effectively partner with local businesses, is critical for coordinating our recovery from the recession."

“Not Business as Usual”: Eastmont SSA Career Center Gets the Job Done

Since opening in 2008, the Eastmont Social Services Agency (SSA) Career Center has helped its clients get over 3,700 jobs. What's the secret behind the center's job placement success, particularly in a challenging economy? One key factor is the center's talented and compassionate staff members, who assist hundreds of job seekers each month.

"We're not business as usual. Our personal approach is what makes us effective," said Rochelle Baxter-Green, Oakland PIC job developer and business representative at the center. "We let our

clients know that we're no different than they are. Everyone's gone through challenges - it's what you do on the other side of the challenge that's important."

Through a partnership with the Alameda County Social Services Agency (SSA), the Oakland PIC operates two SSA Career Centers, located in East Oakland and North Oakland. The SSA Career Centers exclusively serve individuals who receive CalWORKs or General Assistance benefits.



Eastmont SSA Career Center staff

At the Eastmont SSA Career Center, participants complete an intensive program that includes several weeks of job search workshops and one-on-one counseling. Workshops cover job search essentials including resume and cover letter development, interviewing, and networking. In addition, participants develop skills to handle stress, manage money, and resolve conflict. As needed, center staff will connect participants with resources to clean up criminal records and cope with issues such as homelessness and substance use.

The center works with many local companies seeking workers, and regularly hosts onsite recruitment events including job fairs. Representing fields such as information technology, nursing, retail, finance, and security, employers are consistently impressed with the center's job seeking clients.

"Having a resume and cover letter doesn't mean you're job ready," said Baxter-Green. "You may also need to address a variety of issues, and we teach people how to do that. At the center, we expect our clients to show up on time, be accountable, and be consistent. We want people to be fully prepared to succeed on the job."

To learn more about the SSA Career Centers, visit <http://www.oaklandpic.org/special-projects.html>

Six Ways to Get Your Resume Noticed by Employers

When Maureen Nelson, the Oakland PIC's manager of Adult Career Services, helps her clients write resumes, she tells them to think of themselves as a product and the employer as the buyer. To make your resume stand out, try these tips from Nelson.

1. Make it sell. Instead of a job objective, use a profile paragraph at the top of your resume that lists your features and benefits. Profile paragraphs list what you offer; objectives list what you want (something the employer usually doesn't care about). Features are aspects of you; benefits are how your features will help the employer.

2. Make it relevant. Make sure every part of your resume addresses the employer's needs. Don't count on the employer to figure out how to connect the dots - spell it out for them. This is especially true if you're a career changer. You don't have to include all of your experience. And it's okay to include skills you've gained from a job without listing the job itself.



Maureen Nelson, Manager of Adult Career Services

3. Make it organized. Your resume should tell a story - the story of your career. As you develop and revise your resume, ask yourself: Does it make sense? Does it hang together? Have people inside and outside your field read it? Rewrite parts that confuse or bore anyone.

4. Make it appealing. Consider how your resume is laid out and formatted. Think about the industry you're in and what types of documents its practitioners read. A resume written for a law firm will be different from a resume written for the creative department of an advertising agency.

5. Make it believable. Pack your resume with examples of your accomplishments. Show the value you've brought to previous companies. Did you save money, increase market share, or raise awareness? You can also include third-party endorsements, such as relevant quotes from bosses or coworkers. List each person's name, title, and company.

6. Make it memorable. Give your resume something to be remembered by, such as a graphic that suggests your field, a bit of color, two columns, or boxed text. There are many ways to spice up a resume. How much you can deviate from a traditional resume will be determined by your industry.

Lastly, remember that the best resume in the world is not going to help you if you don't conduct an effective job hunt. The most important part of getting a job is the people-to-people connection. Get to know someone "on the inside."

Adapted from a blog post by Maureen Nelson. Visit

<http://takechargecareer.wordpress.com/2011/05/16/6-ways-to-get-your-resume-noticed-by-employers/> for more information.

Staff Q and A: Louis King

Since 2008, Louis King has been an outreach specialist and peer mentor with the Oakland PIC, assisting individuals who have been incarcerated or are at risk of criminal justice system involvement. Whether he's meeting with clients at the PIC or participating in innovative initiatives such as the Alameda County Superior Court's Parolee Reentry Court Program, King works tirelessly to connect people seeking a second chance with training and employment opportunities.

Tell me about the PIC's reentry program. "Our program is called Breaking Through Barriers. We provide individual counseling and help people enroll in job training. We also offer job search workshops, computer classes, and other activities to help people increase their employability."

How do your own experiences impact the work you do? "I'm a people person. I've worked in a variety of jobs, including construction, security, and owning my own trucking business. I've also had personal experience in the criminal justice system. No one likes jail. If I have the opportunity to help people before they even get there, or help them find their way back once they're released from jail, then I feel that I'm making a difference."

Describe one of your clients. "I picked up a young man from jail one day and took him to a halfway house. He had an 'I don't want to do it' attitude at first - a lot of people do, until they meet someone who cares for them. This individual, once he realized the support the PIC could offer, did



Louis King (right) talks with a Target employee (left) at a recruitment event.

really well. We helped him get trained to work in construction, and he now has a good job. At the PIC we treat people with respect, and we show a lot of love."

What advice do you have for job seekers? "When you go to a job interview, be polite and dress like you want a job. Sell yourself. It's not what the employer or the job can do for you - it's the contribution you can make to that company. Call and follow up after the interview."

“PIC Services are the Best in the West!”: Job Seeker Testimonial

We recently received this note from Art J., a former client of the Oakland PIC. When Art came to the PIC after being laid off, he needed to update his skills and find a new job.

I am pleased to say the services that I received at the Oakland PIC were the "Best in the West"! PIC provided me with training assistance, computer access, resume support, and interviewing tips.

I would like to thank Employment Services Specialist **Mayra Ramirez** for all of her support. Mayra helped me secure funds for computer training at San Francisco State, and also shared many job leads with me.

Maureen Nelson, the PIC's manager of Adult Career Services, helped reinvent my resume. She also urged me to join LinkedIn, which was instrumental in my job search. Contacts in my LinkedIn network sent my resume to different companies, and several of these companies called me in for interviews.

Of the 200 resumes I sent out, I received seven invitations to interview and was offered two jobs, both in CAD (Computer Assisted Drafting). I recently accepted one of those jobs. Many thanks to "Team PIC" for your assistance!

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