

Wisconsin Community Services, Inc.  
CDBG Narrative  
January 29, 2007

Background

WCS provides job readiness and vocational training classes at the House of Correction (HOC) in Franklin to an underserved population of inmates who will be returning to the community, of which approximately **70% reside within CDBG boundaries**. Inmates qualify for programming based on TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) scores and the length of time they have left on their sentence prior to release from custody. WCS is the only agency providing employment assistance to this hard-to-serve population at the HOC.

WCS contributes to all four of the City of Milwaukee's goals of reducing crime, increasing property values, increasing economic vitality, and improving neighborhood quality of life. WCS contributes to improving neighborhood quality of life by assisting offenders in becoming self-sufficient, productive members of their community. WCS instructors teach offenders the importance of obtaining employment so they can be responsible by providing for themselves and their families. Offenders with stable employment are less likely to recidivate; therefore the end result is a reduction in the City of Milwaukee's crime rate. Ex-offenders who maintain stable employment improve the neighborhood quality of life by remaining crime-free and contributing to the economic vitality of the community by funneling earnings back into area businesses. Low-crime neighborhoods result in increased property values in those neighborhoods, benefiting the community as a whole. In summary, the educational and vocational classes, along with the job placement services provided by WCS assists CDBG in obtaining all of their long-term outcomes.

Outcomes

- **See handout**

Job-Readiness Skills Class

- Job application preparation
- Interviewing techniques
- How to address criminal record
- Resume building
- Cold call techniques
- Appropriate dress code for job search and interviewing
- Characteristics of a good work ethic

Vocational Training

- Includes all of the components of the Job-Readiness Skills Class listed above
- WCS has trained in welding and material handling in the past 2 years
- Welders are trained in blueprint reading, measurement, OSHA standards, MIG, stick, and Flux Core Arc welding
- Material handlers receive forklift certification, along with training in OSHA standards, warehouse operations, package handling, palletizing, and inventory control

### Job Placement Strategies

- All graduates of vocational training and job readiness classes are provided with a **resume**, **cover letter**, and **list of references**, allowing them the immediate ability to start their employment search
- All graduates are assisted with obtaining necessary identification, including their **social security cards**, **birth certificates**, and **state ID's**, prior to their search for employment, allowing them to be prepared to show proof of identity to begin work immediately
- WCS has several job developers that work individually with clients to help guide them in targeting employers that are hiring for positions they are qualified for (based on education level, skill level, and prior work history)
- WCS job developers review newspaper classifieds, employment websites, and other publications on a daily basis to assist clients in obtaining leads on open positions
- WCS job developers attend job fairs by organizations and employers to market the program and its participants
- WCS job developers meet in person with hiring managers to provide them with information on WCS classes and **employer tax incentives** for hiring felons, along with offering them an open invitation to tour the HOC and observe WCS training and job readiness classes
- Clients are provided with bus tickets to eliminate transportation barriers to and from work

### Job Retention Strategies

- Prior to release from custody, WCS staff verifies client contact information, including phone numbers for several relatives to ensure the client can be reached
- Employers are provided with contact information for WCS job developers in case of any on-the-job problems the client may encounter that staff may be able to assist with
- WCS job developers stay in constant contact with employers and employed clients in an attempt to be proactive by addressing any problems as they arise- this is done via the phone and in-person visits to employers. Job developers advocate for clients when necessary
- WCS provides clients with required work-related items, such as tools and other equipment, if they are not able to purchase the items themselves
- WCS has developed a job retention incentive system to encourage clients to maintain employment. Required benchmarks for incentives are 30, 60, 90, and 180 days of employment, with graduated incentives based on length of employment