



# Utah Defendant Offender Workforce Development Task Force (UDOWD)

November 2013

In July of 2009, the Commission of Criminal and Juvenile Justice awarded the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) an ARRA Justice Assistance Grant. With this investment, UDC hired six agents to collaborate with allied agencies in job development and offer direct assistance to individuals under the jurisdiction of UDC. These six agents, along with four federal probation officers were the original founding members of the UDOWD Task Force.

## Task Force Goals

- Facilitate collaboration between federal, state and local agencies
- Seek to eliminate inter-agency communication and procedural barriers
- Cross train allied agencies
- Increase community awareness
- Assist ex-offenders in seeking, obtaining, and maintaining gainful employment
- **Reduce recidivism**

## Community Partners

- Utah Department of Corrections
- U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services
- U.S. District Court
- U. S. Attorney's Office
- Utah Federal Defender's Office
- Utah County Sheriff's Office
- Salt Lake County Criminal Justice
- State of Utah – Third District Court
- U.S. Bureau of Prisons
- Utah Department of Workforce Services
- Utah State Office of Rehabilitation
- Utah State Office of Education
- Faith Based Groups
- Non-profit Groups

\*This list is subject to change at any given time

## UDOWD Structural Design



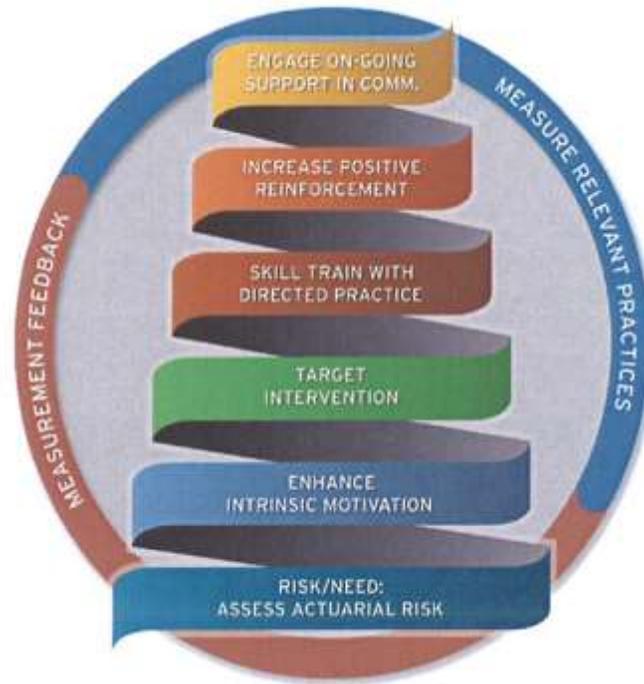
The **advisory board** consists of executive level individuals from various federal, state, county and local agencies. It is currently chaired by Russel Thelin, Director, Division of Rehabilitation. This administrative body meets on a quarterly basis. Their primary responsibility is to provide support for the working group and help alleviate inter-agency and procedural barriers.

The **working group** consists of individuals from various agencies, many of whom are the original members who initially formed the task force. It is currently chaired by Tracy Belnap-Harris, from the Department of Workforce Services. This group is responsible for curriculum development, job readiness training for offenders, cross-training for allied agencies, and community awareness. They meet on a monthly basis and report directly to the advisory board.

Utah, Salt Lake, Davis, and Weber counties have their own functional task forces. Similar task forces are in the infancy and or developmental stages in Cache, Tooele, Iron, Washington and Uintah counties. These teams deal directly with employers, participate in job fairs and community events, and prepare offenders for employment. They meet on a monthly or bi-monthly basis and report directly to the working group. Some of the working group members attend the county task force meetings on a regular basis.

11 multi-agency Offender Employment Specialist (OES) trainings have been conducted throughout the state dating back to 2010. The most recent trainings were conducted in Weber and Washington counties in October and November of this year. The primary goal of the eight hour OES training, which is sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections, is to provide assistance to and encourage agencies to share resources and increase collaboration and communication with their own and outside agencies. Additional OES trainings have already been scheduled or are in the planning stages throughout the state. The instructors, who are from various agencies, have all been certified in offender workforce development through the National Institute of Corrections.

## Evidence Based Practice



The UDOWD Task Force strives to emphasize evidence based practices in the following manners:

- Assesses the employment risks/needs of ex-offenders
- Enhances intrinsic motivation by assisting ex-offenders seek, obtain, and maintain steady employment through job readiness classes and on-going support
- Focuses on employment as a targeted intervention, recognizing employment is a vital key to successfully community supervision
- Seeks to provide skills based training and then allows for directed practice as participants seek employment
- Continues to provide on-going support in the community through collaboration and inter-agency cross training

## Statistical Report

Fiscal Year	2010	2011	2012
# of UDC offenders who received services	558	822	1227
# of offenders obtaining employment within 180 days	231	447	811
% of offenders who obtained employment	41	54	66

\*Through three quarters of 2013, the percentage of offenders who have obtained employment who have received services from the task forces is currently over 70%.

\*\*The reported statistics are relatively conservative as they are a reflection of only those individuals directly under the jurisdiction of UDC. Our team also assists individuals who are under federal and county jurisdiction, along with individuals who have a criminal history, but are not under any type of federal, state or county jurisdiction. We estimate those individuals would increase our total statistics by an additional 10-15%.

Whether it's the drug using bank robber who served close to 20 years in prison obtaining an entry level warehouse job and within two years advancing to management where he was making a six figure income or the child sex offender who went from placing over 30 applications without a single interview to obtaining a job with a local manufacturing company, our program has had a noticeable positive offenders, staff and the community in general.

## Task Force Challenges

- **Staff turnover** – As employee skills and training increase, staff from all agencies are finding it easier to promote or obtain employment with other agencies. This causes a need for ongoing training.
- **Inter-agency training** – Training staff how to be more productive when dealing with individuals with a criminal history is vital, but very time consuming.
- **Economy** – The economic downturn has created a labor market that is abundant with potential workers, dramatically increasing the competition for fewer job openings.
- **Lack of resources** – Acquiring funds for training, printing, and advertising continues to prove difficult.
- **Lack of staff** – While the number of offenders who have received our assistance has steadily increased from year to year and our staff training is being requested by various agencies throughout the state, we are operating with the same amount of staff as when we started the task force.