

# **CITY OF CHICAGO INITIATIVES TARGETED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH CRIMINAL BACKGROUNDS**

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## **1. Chicago Department of Human Resources — City of Chicago Hiring Guidelines**

The Chicago Department of Human Resources has promulgated new guidelines for reviewing criminal convictions—a direct recommendation of the Mayoral Policy Caucus on Reentry. Pursuant to the City’s commitment to help people with criminal convictions safely reenter the workforce, the City reviews criminal conviction information on a case by case basis. This ensures that individuals who have been convicted of criminal activity are placed into and/or occupy City positions that are suitable and appropriate for the individual and do not place undue risk upon the City. The fact that an applicant has a criminal conviction history, standing alone, does not automatically disqualify the applicant.

The following parameters are taken into consideration as part of the case-by-case review:

- Nature of specific offense(s) for which the candidate was convicted;
- Nature of sentencing;
- Number of convictions;
- Length of time that has passed since the conviction(s);
- Relationship between the criminal act(s) for which the candidate was convicted and the nature of the work for which the individual is being considered;
- Age of the candidate at the time of the conviction;
- Evidence of rehabilitation (i.e. whether candidate has completed a treatment or counseling program or received a certification of relief from disabilities or good conduct);
- Extent to which the individual has been open, honest and cooperative with the City in examining his or her background;
- Any other information relevant to the candidate’s suitability.

For more information, please contact: Ann Nakaguchi, 312-744-4976, [anakaguchi@cityofchicago.org](mailto:anakaguchi@cityofchicago.org)

## **2. Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development — Customized Job Training Program**

The Chicago Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development (MOWD) committed \$500,000 to a new “Customized Job Training (CJT) Program”—another direct recommendation of the Caucus. This program stands apart from other traditional job training models as offering greater flexibility and stronger ties to employer demands. The goal of the CJT program is to ensure that Chicagoans with criminal histories develop skills through training which is specifically tailored to meet current and projected employer demand. The CJT program will enable employers to adjust to rapidly changing conditions in the business world. Two agencies were selected from a competitive process. They both had strong employer partner(s), and their training programs are driven and implemented by the agency and employer partner in collaboration together. The two industries targeted are (1) Shipping and Receiving and (2) Food Service.

For more information, please contact: Chris Mendoza, 312-746-7297, [cmendoza@cityofchicago.org](mailto:cmendoza@cityofchicago.org)

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## **3. Mayor's Office of Workforce Development — Social Enterprise Ventures Program**

MOWD committed \$525,000 to a new “Social Enterprise Ventures (SEV) Program”—another direct recommendation of the Caucus. This program is vastly different from other more traditional education, employment and training models. A social enterprise is a revenue-generating venture that provides a nonprofit with unrestricted funds and enhances the organization’s core mission. Earned income from these ventures build and sustain real jobs while providing wages, career tracks and supportive services for people who have substantial barriers to employment. By cultivating a social enterprise, nonprofits are able to expand their portfolio of workforce development strategies for formerly incarcerated men and women. As such, this program offers an opportunity for people with criminal records to gain real work experience in a real business environment with standard practices and procedures sensitive to their individual needs and personal circumstances. Three agencies were selected from a competitive process. They demonstrated innovative business ideas with potential for market growth. The three industries targeted are (1) Custodial Maintenance; (2) Urban Agriculture and Organic Farming; and (3) Staffing Services. The agencies will receive technical assistance from the University of Chicago’s Graduate School of Business’ faculty and students as well as other experts in the field.

For more information, please contact: Chris Mendoza, 312-746-7297, [cmendoza@cityofchicago.org](mailto:cmendoza@cityofchicago.org)

## **4. Mayor's Office of Workforce Development — Transitional Jobs Program**

MOWD launched a pilot “Transitional Jobs (TJ) Program” in 2004 specially targeted to help formerly incarcerated individuals find jobs in a variety of industries, such as hospitality and warehousing. This unique program provides rapid attachment to the workforce for men and women with felony backgrounds using time-limited, publicly-subsidized jobs that combine real work, skill development and supportive services. Through a regimen of immediate paid work experience coupled with case management, job readiness and basic training, individuals can learn the customs and routines of work, gain valuable skills, establish a work record and generate references to obtain steady, unsubsidized jobs. Such a model helps the participants to overcome substantial barriers to employment. Back in 2004, two agencies were selected from a competitive process. Building off the strong support for transitional jobs as set forth by a direct recommendation of the Caucus, MOWD doubled its funding for the TJ Program in 2006, adding another two delegate agencies and thereby increasing the City’s current annual investment in transitional jobs to \$800,000.

For more information, please contact: Chris Mendoza, 312-746-7297, [cmendoza@cityofchicago.org](mailto:cmendoza@cityofchicago.org)

## **5. Mayor's Office of Workforce Development — Customized Work Services Program**

The Customized Work Services Program combines elements of a transitional jobs program with various City of Chicago work services projects. Transitional jobs are temporary jobs that combine real work activities, skill development and supportive services to help participants overcome substantial barriers to employment. Transitional jobs help persons with criminal records break negative life patterns and engage in positive steps to re-entering the community as responsible, productive citizens. By attaching ex-offenders to real work activities, the chances of recidivism are significantly reduced. The Customized Work Services Program will use City of Chicago work services projects as the real work experience

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opportunities for program participants. Participants will be trained in one or more of the following work services projects:

1. Grounds Maintenance, Snow Removal, and De-icing of City Properties
2. Small Engine Repairs
3. Fire Hydrant Painting
4. Grounds Maintenance and Tree Pit Maintenance

Individuals participating in the program are paid \$7.50 per hour. Through a regimen of case management, basic job readiness training and paid work, participants are expected to acclimate to work routines and generate references necessary for finding unsubsidized jobs outside of the city workforce.

For more information, please contact: Chris Mendoza, 312-746-7297, [cmendoza@cityofchicago.org](mailto:cmendoza@cityofchicago.org)

## **6. Department of Fleet Management — Automotive Repair**

Mayor Daley introduced an ordinance in 2004 to allow the Chicago Department of Fleet Management to partner with a job-training program on the city's south side to help individuals with criminal records gain paid work experience as auto mechanics repairing City vehicles. The Chicagoland Youth and Adult Training Center (CYATC), currently housed at Kennedy-King College, is a not-for-profit agency that provides intensive vocational automotive classes to at-risk young people, including those with past criminal convictions, as well as supportive services, drug screening and life-skills training. Students can receive a GED certificate, if needed, as well as 20 hours of community college credit. By the time they graduate, students have 40 percent of the skills necessary to be a master mechanic. Through this new partnership with Fleet, CYATC's graduates have the opportunity to do preventative maintenance on non-public safety light-duty City vehicles. This paid work enables these individuals to establish a foundation for continued employment at private auto body shops. One year into the collaboration, Fleet has already sent 1,502 vehicles and has expanded the types of vehicles sent to CYATC for preventive maintenance from cars and SUVs to include pick-up trucks, vans and diesel powered vehicles. This City contract has also laid the foundation for a similar potential arrangement with the State.

For more information, please contact: Eileen Joyce, 312-744-0961, [eileenjoyce@cityofchicago.org](mailto:eileenjoyce@cityofchicago.org)

## **7. Department of Revenue — Call Center Operations and Debt Collection**

On May 24, 2006, Mayor Daley introduced an ordinance to allow the Chicago Department of Revenue to partner with a collection agency to provide formerly incarcerated individuals with gainful employment. Specifically, the ordinance allows the Department of Revenue to refer some of the city's outstanding debt to Collectors Training Institute (CTI), a licensed, bonded, minority-owned, collection agency located on the city's west side. CTI has partnered with the North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN), a not-for-profit agency that provides formerly incarcerated individuals with employment services and case management to help them find and secure good job opportunities. Participants will gain marketable work experience and assist the City of Chicago in reducing outstanding debt and lower collection costs. NLEN will perform all of the recruiting, pre-screening, drug-testing and case management functions of prospective employees. CTI will train and employ those individuals to collect accounts provided by the City of Chicago. The Department of Revenue will have the discretion to further screen personnel and may

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choose what information is available to collectors. Security measures include encrypting the data. This ordinance passed out of subcommittee on June 14, 2006 and was approved by the City Council on June 28, 2006. The Department of Revenue is currently working to develop the contract terms.

For more information, please contact: North Lawndale Employment Network, 773-265-7940, [info@nlen.org](mailto:info@nlen.org)

### **8. Department of Streets and Sanitation — Neighborhood Beautification and Recycling**

The Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation began assisting a job placement organization in 2005 to launch a pilot street-cleaning, recycling and neighborhood beautification business in the Auburn-Gresham neighborhood. The creation of Cleanslate was inspired in part by The Doe Fund's Ready, Willing & Able Program, the first residential paid work and training program for homeless people in New York City. Cleanslate provides on-the-job training and transitional support services for participants who face substantial obstacles to employment, including criminal histories and recent incarceration. Interns help to keep sidewalks, parkways, public gardens and vacant lots clean while instilling renewed pride in communities. Interns also educate neighborhood residents and local business owners on the importance of recycling. Cleanslate provides high-end professional services that strategically complement the City's services. In the first six months of operation, 14 interns had been placed in permanent jobs with benefits in the private sector. With the City's continued assistance, Cleanslate expanded operations in 2006, adding three more work crews in the Quad Communities, the Illinois Medical District and most recently in Uptown.

For more information, please contact: Cleanslate, 773-858-7611, [info@cleanslate.org](mailto:info@cleanslate.org)

### **9. Department of Environment and Mayor's Office of Workforce Development — Collection and Recycling Center on Goose Island**

The Chicago Department of Environment (DOE), in collaboration with the Chicago Mayor's Office of Workforce Development (MOWD), is creating training opportunities for individuals with criminal records at the new Collection and Recycling Center on Goose Island in Chicago. The Center provides a location for City residents to discard obsolete electronic devices and household hazardous waste in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. DOE and MOWD have capitalized on the infrastructure and resources available through this new Center by creating an on-site job-training program for both warehousing and computer repair, also referred to as the Computer Recycling Center Training (CRCT) program. Program participants will be recruited directly from local social service agencies and educated in the industry through a six-week training course. Upon successful completion of the training course, participants will meet with job developers and interview for related full-time employment.

For more information, please contact: (312) 744-8691, [environment@cityofchicago.org](mailto:environment@cityofchicago.org)

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## **10. Department of Environment — Greencorps Chicago**

Greencorps Chicago has been providing job training in the landscaping trade since 1994 for individuals experiencing barriers to employment, including individuals with criminal histories. Over 250 people have graduated from the program since its inception, trained to enter jobs in Chicago's many landscaping firms. Through in-class instruction and hands-on experience building and supporting community gardens, trainees in the Greencorps program learn about horticulture, garden design, operation of power tools and heavy equipment, and construction. During the nine-month training period, they also receive supportive services to further improve their chances of maintaining full-time employment upon graduation. In 2007, Greencorps plans to expand its job training program to offer electronics recycling and home weatherization. With the three tracks combined, Greencorps will provide training to 75 Chicagoans in 2007. A pilot in weatherization was held in the early months of 2006, in which over 76,000 square feet of residential property was made more energy efficient through the installation of products such as weather stripping, caulk and plastic sheeting. The program hopes to expand the offer in 2007 to reach over 2,000 homes to help Chicago residents reduce their winter heating bills. Building off of the successful first year with the CRCT program, Greencorps will assume its management for a pilot project this fall and full expansion in 2007. The program will be folded into the existing Greencorps model which will lengthen the time that participants receive training, and will provide the critical social service support that they need to be successful.

For more information, please contact: Patrick Brown (312) 746-9508, [pbrown@oaiinc.org](mailto:pbrown@oaiinc.org)