

# EMPLOYMENT FOCUSED SERVICES

by PathStone Corporation

Region 2 • Rochester, New York  
pathstone.org

PathStone



Connecting You to Opportunities

Job Training • Unemployment • Food • Public Safety • Recidivism

## INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Employment Focused Services provides evidence-based interventions to individuals at a moderate or high risk of recidivism, enabling them to find and retain employment and avoid recidivism.

## LOCAL NEED ADDRESSED BY INITIATIVE

PathStone Corporation has operated an Employment Focused Services Initiative since January 2017. Our evidence-based program for justice-involved individuals increases employment opportunities through education and training and reduces recidivism through job readiness services and cognitive restructuring.

Local need for Employment Focused Services was demonstrated by

1. our Community Needs Assessment, and
2. New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services indicators.

Our Community Needs Assessment information identified increased employment opportunities and educational and training opportunities as the two greatest demonstrated needs based on quantitative data from the New York State Community Action Assessment Tool and qualitative data collected directly from low-income individuals in focus group meetings.

The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services defines local priority service areas for Employment Focused (reentry) Services as counties which have greater numbers of arrestees and/or the greatest number of moderate to high-risk individuals under community supervision.



Further, the Division of Criminal Justice Services applies two specific indicators to identify local priority service areas. These indicators were as follows:

1. The county had at least 2,000 or more felony and misdemeanor level arrests during 2015, or
2. The county had 250 or more moderate to high-risk parolees and/or probationers (in total) placed under community supervision during 2015.

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services analysis using these two indicators concluded that 29 counties met the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services priority service location criteria: Based on our Community Needs Assessment and the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services priority service area criteria, PathStone selected its contiguous service area for this Employment Focused Services reentry program.

## ROLE OF CSBG FUNDS

While attempting to provide job readiness services

and cognitive restructuring, staff noticed that participants frequently arrived at the sessions too hungry to adequately pay attention. Initially, staff efforts to address this barrier focused on seeking food donations and even buying items out of their own pockets. This approach proved to be insufficient because many donated items required preparation prior to being ready to eat, and participants needed immediate nutrition. Fortunately, CSBG Discretionary Funds were made available by the NYS Department of State Division of Community Services (DCS), which approved PathStone's plan to obtain professionally prepared meals for breakfast and lunch. A crowdfunding campaign raised sufficient funds to purchase a refrigerator to assure food safety. This nutrition program was extremely well-received and, in addition to enabling participants to focus on the programming, served as an effective incentive for their continued attendance.

As with every facet of life, since March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the program. Challenges included an inability to conduct outreach in the community and provide face-to-face services to participants, along with the shutdown of training facilities and almost everything else. A bright spot, however, has been the DCS's release of discretionary funding to address pandemic-related

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needs. Using these funds, PathStone has been able to revive the nutrition program, among other services and programs. As government restrictions related to COVID-19 have eased, participation in Employment Focused Services has gradually been able to resume, albeit limited by partial staffing levels and hours of operation. The nutrition program approach has necessarily shifted to more of a "meals to go" format, but remains a valuable program resource.

## TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

This initiative directly addresses community poverty by helping individuals find work, avoid recidivism,

and become active members within their families and communities. Employment Focused Services serves individuals on probation in the counties of Monroe, Ontario and Orleans. Primarily funded by the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, the program is "performance-based," meaning that once specific milestones have been achieved for participants, PathStone receives a predefined payment for each milestone. The program's five milestones are Enrollment, Midpoint (provision of job readiness services and cognitive restructuring), Completion (obtaining education and/or training designed to lead to employment), Job Placement, and Job Retention of at least 90 days.

## EVIDENCE-BASED OUTCOMES

Employment Focused Services has achieved 118% of its enrollment goals and 117% of its job placement goals in the past two program years, helping 124 individuals at moderate or high risk for recidivism secure in-demand employment opportunities, positively impacting community poverty through employment and public safety through decreased offenses.

## EQUITY LENS

People of color are disproportionately represented in all justice-involved populations, and equity demands that they should also be proportionately represented in services to mitigate the impacts of justice involvement, one of which is decreased employment opportunities. People of color in the Greater Rochester area are more likely to be unemployed than their counterparts across New York State and across the nation. PathStone's Employment Focused Services data indicates success in positively impacting people of color: 65% of those served self-report as Black/African American and 12% self-report as Hispanic/Latinx.

## CUSTOMER VOICE

Since 2015, PathStone has led a Career Pathways Collaborative comprised of approximately 20 active members, including employers, justice and law enforcement representatives at the federal to local levels, legal aid, workforce development, and education, training, housing, health, social and veteran service providers. These individuals are local residents and

dedicated reentry advocates. Many share the lived experiences of those served in our reentry programs. The Career Pathways Collaborative meets quarterly and aids in the development and accomplishment of program goals, including supporting participants in securing employment.

PathStone also has multiple processes that ensure that customer voice is taken into consideration. One is a formal feedback system facilitated via mail. Participants' feedback is sent (anonymously or not) directly to PathStone's CEO with feedback about program impacts. This feedback is also shared with Executive Directors and Program Staff as part of a persistent information loop that influences program methods and actions.

Similarly, focus groups are engaged during our Community Needs Assessment, and key informants are engaged during the development of specific programs. Finally, PathStone collects "Learnings" from Employment Focused Services participants to qualitatively assess the program's impact.

## Contact

PathStone Corporation

400 East Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14607

Website: [www.pathstone.org](http://www.pathstone.org)

Email: [info@pathstone.org](mailto:info@pathstone.org)

Phone: (800) 888-6770



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