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## **NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOB SUCCESS AFTER INCARCERATION WITH COUNTY-WIDE “SECTOR” PROGRAM**

*Innovative program combines training, paid work experience, and mental health support to help participants enter high-growth sectors with living wage careers.*

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles County **Office of Diversion and Reentry** (ODR), together with six community-based partner organizations, has launched **Skills and Experience for the Careers of Tomorrow (SECTOR)**, a \$4 million annual program aimed at helping people who have been to jail or prison or otherwise involved in the justice system develop the skills they need for well-paying jobs with opportunities for career advancement. Offered across Los Angeles County, the program combines an innovative sector-based approach with services tailored to the needs of people impacted by the justice system to help them get back to work and obtain fulfilling careers.

**SECTOR** aims to provide justice-system-involved adults with the help they need to support themselves and their families through long-term employment. Skills training and paid work experience will help participants earn industry-recognized credentials that can help them enter growing fields with room for advancement. The program offers financial assistance, as well as supportive services such as mental health services and career coaching from staff who themselves have lived experience of the justice system. It aims to serve 500 participants in its first year.

“It’s impossible to overstate the importance of a good job to success after jail or prison, but persistently high unemployment rates for people with justice involvement tell us just how big a challenge they still face,” said **Peter Espinoza** (Judge-ret.), director of ODR. “For people facing those obstacles, SECTOR will give them a path to a career, and the support they need as they walk that path—and that can mean the difference between successfully rejoining society or returning to the justice system.”

The program, funded by a Prop 47 grant from the Board of State and Community Corrections, serves participants over the age of 18 who have been arrested, charged with, or convicted of a criminal offense and who have struggled with mental health challenges or substance use disorder.

“Programs like SECTOR serve as a stepping stone to economic opportunity and prosperity for people who have been locked out of the workforce because of their history with the justice system,” said **Le’Ann Duran**, deputy division director at **The Council of State Governments Justice Center**. “SECTOR allows participants to earn as they learn, which is key to their economic success.”

SECTOR provides training and paid work experience opportunities to help participants obtain skills and credentials that are in demand by employers. Program offerings are developed with input from employer and industry partners who commit to hiring participants upon completion. Selected industries have demonstrated strong potential for growth and for career advancement in Los Angeles County. They include sectors that already actively recruit individuals with justice involvement, such as the construction trades, and open access to other growing sectors such as information technology, health care, and green jobs.

To ensure that participants remain financially stable through this training period, SECTOR provides financial assistance with stipends during skills training sessions, wages earned from paid work experience, and incentive payments for program participation and job retention. Meanwhile, Cognitive Behavioral Intervention (CBI)-based group sessions will help participants build skills that can help them avoid situations that can lead to recidivism and solve problems in the workplace.

“We look forward to providing workforce development to our young people who have often had difficult challenges in their past,” said **Bill Bedrossian**, the CEO of **Covenant House CA**, a SECTOR program partner based in Hollywood. “We are confident that the SECTOR program will enable us to help young people explore career paths that will lead to livable wages and vocational joy. Guiding our youth towards careers that they love, rather than just a job, can ensure that they will have a lifetime of stability and success.”

“It’s one thing for someone to tell you, ‘I get what you feel,’ but it’s another thing when they can say, ‘I’ve been down this same road — I’m just a little further down,’” said **Julio** (a pseudonym), a career counselor at **Paving the Way**, a SECTOR program partner based in the Antelope Valley, who was himself previously incarcerated. “Once people see that it is possible to move forward, it gives them optimism in a situation that can seem pretty bleak at the time.”

“I’ve been doing this work for a long time, and being able to be a pioneer with the SECTOR program is truly an honor,” said **Janie Hodge**, the Executive Director of **Paving the Way**. “I can’t wait to see all the people we will help get to that next step as well as the doors that we’ll help open for them.”

“We know from lived experience that a holistic, edifying program can lead a person to thrive after incarceration,” said **Sam Lewis**, Executive Director of the **Anti-Recidivism Coalition** (ARC), a reentry and advocacy community organization based in Los Angeles. “SECTOR’s emphasis on supporting the whole person as they make their way back into society will help us empower transitional-age youth to lead their best lives.”

“When Janie and I met back in 2010, I immediately knew we shared the same passion for changing lives through education,” said **Glenn Bland**, owner of **Bland Solar**, which will both train and employ SECTOR participants enrolled with Paving the Way. “I’m more excited now than at any time in my career regarding the renewable energy industry, and I love being a part of SECTOR.”

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“The Digital Dove animation and special effects training program will equip young people with employable skills and create access to rewarding careers in the film industry,” said **Jay Roewe** and **Cynthia Kanner**, the Senior Vice Presidents of Production and Incentives and of Post-Production, respectively, at **HBO/Warner Media**, which will train SECTOR participants enrolled with Covenant House of California in digital animation and special effects. “We could not be more excited for the young people who will participate in this program.”

“Having SECTOR partner with Chrysalis is going to enhance and grow our work in a way that we know can make an impact on the lives of people who have counted on us for assistance on their job search,” said **Mark Loranger**, President & CEO of Downtown, Santa Monica- and Pacoima-based community partner **Chrysalis**, which helps clients with barriers to employment find work. “Our clients can change their lives, especially if they can navigate barriers to training opportunities in growing job industries to secure jobs with living wages.”

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*The Office of Diversion and Reentry is part of Los Angeles Health Services. Its mission is to develop and implement county-wide criminal justice diversion for persons with mental and/or substance use disorders, to provide reentry support services based on individual’s needs, and to reduce youth involvement with the justice system.*