

# ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

**BETTY JEAN GRANT**

*Chair of the Legislature  
2nd District Legislator*



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January 23, 2012

Robert M. Graber, Clerk  
Erie County Legislature  
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor  
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Mr. Graber:

For clock-in to the public record, I have attached informational materials from the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), submitted by Jeffrey M. Conrad, Erie County Director of CEO.

Please direct this communication to the Legislature's Public Safety Committee for discussion at an upcoming committee meeting.

Thank you

Sincerely,

**BETTY JEAN GRANT**  
Chair of the Erie County Legislature  
2nd District Legislator

# CEO BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Newly released formerly incarcerated people list finding a job as their number one priority. Yet limited skills, lack of work references, and discrimination make it hard to get working

## THE BARRIERS

**FORMERLY INCARCERATED PEOPLE FACE HUGE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT.**

- About 70% do not have a high school diploma.
- Most have few work skills, limited work experience and no references.
- Formerly incarcerated people are competing for entry level jobs in a challenging job market.

**MANY JOBSEEKERS ARE HIT TWICE WITH DISCRIMINATION.**

- Surveys find employers are much more reluctant to hire people with records than they are any other disadvantaged group, such as welfare recipients.
- Nearly 1/2 of all formerly incarcerated people are African-American, nearly 1/5 are Latino or Asian, and studies find that African-American men are the least likely job applicants to receive offers.

## BREAKING THE BARRIER

**CEO ACTS AS AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN JOB SEEKERS WITH CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS AND EMPLOYERS.**

- CEO helps clients develop an employment plan that matches their skills with current job openings.
- When clients are ready to enter the full-time, private sector workforce, CEO makes the introduction to employers for them.
- Employers are willing to lower their barriers and hire CEO workers because:
  - They have a work reference through CEO's transitional work program.
  - CEO's job development staff gets to know the job seekers and properly match them to the employers' needs.
- Even after placement, CEO job coaches continue to provide support, counseling, and workplace mediation to employers and clients.

## THE SOLUTION

**NOT SURPRISINGLY, UP TO 80% OF FORMERLY INCARCERATED PEOPLE ARE STILL UNEMPLOYED ONE YEAR AFTER RELEASE. CEO OFFERS A SOLUTION BY HIRING FORMERLY INCARCERATED PEOPLE FOR TRANSITIONAL WORK.**

- CEO offers short-term, paid employment at structured, supervised worksites.
- CEO's participants gain work experience and learn basic job skills while earning a paycheck, under the guidance of CEO supervisors and job coaches.
- CEO provides the first work reference for people who have recently been released from prison, a crucial step for entering the workforce.

**WITHIN 3 MONTHS,  OVER 60% of ceo participants returning from state prison who work with us to find a job ARE PLACED IN STABLE, FULL-TIME WORK.**

# CEO HELPS EMPLOYERS

Over 30 years, CEO has worked with over 300 public and private sector companies, helping them fill tens of thousands of job openings with qualified, hard-working staff.

## WHY?

### **BUSINESS OWNERS HIRING LOW AND MODERATELY SKILLED LABOR NEED RELIABLE AND INEXPENSIVE WAYS TO FIND WORKERS**

- Employers in industries such as retail, food services, and wholesale trade report high turnover among unskilled workers.
- Employers report that it is difficult to find hourly-wage employees who come ready and willing to work.
- Employers can spend time and other expenses to recruit a single employee.

## WHO?

### **PEOPLE RETURNING HOME FROM PRISON NEED A SOLID PATH TO THE WORKFORCE IN ORDER TO BUILD CONSTRUCTIVE LIVES AND TAKE CARE OF THEIR FAMILIES**

- Formerly incarcerated people want to work, but often lack the work references necessary for obtaining job interviews.
- People fresh out of prison and jail are often unprepared to enter the workforce, lacking the documents, training, and work experience they need in order to find and hold a job.
- Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people approaches 60% one year after release.

## HOW?

### **CEO HELPS EMPLOYERS FILL POSITIONS QUICKLY AND RELIABLY**

- CEO gives its employer partners access to a large pool of ready workers, all of whom have been trained by CEO.
- CEO serves as a free-of-charge employment agency, providing HR support and carefully matching employer needs with applicant abilities.
- CEO provides assistance to any employees with special needs or difficulties (not just CEO hires) from CEO's experienced workplace counselors.
- CEO can insure its applicants under a federal bonding program for up to \$25,000, at no cost for the first 6 months.
- CEO helps employers apply for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit of up to \$2400 per CEO-trained employee.

### **CEO PREPARES FORMERLY INCARCERATED JOBSEEKERS FOR WORK**

- CEO provides intensive job readiness training after release from jail or prison.
- CEO hires newly released people as transitional workers as supervised, instructive job sites.
- CEO evaluates the interests and skills of participants and matches them with potential employers.
- CEO provides workplace counseling to participants before and after job placement.

## CEO BREAKS THE CYCLE OF INCARCERATION

CEO is committed to breaking the cycle of incarceration for people returning from prison who are looking for work. Our experience and independent research shows that immediate, meaningful employment for formerly incarcerated people results in safer streets, healthier families, and stronger communities.

Securing steady work is at the core of building a constructive life. Yet studies show that the unemployment rate of formerly incarcerated people after one year may be as high as 60 percent because of multiple barriers to employment, including a lack of legitimate work history and employers' unwillingness to hire people with records.

### THE FACTS

#### Unemployment and Recidivism

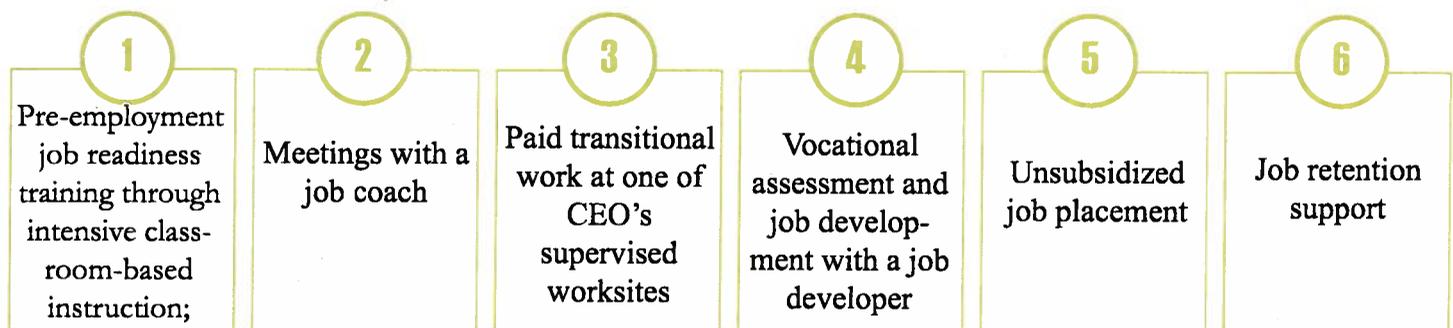
There are currently more than **2 million** people behind bars across the nation. Each year, more than **700,000** state prisoners are released and return to their families and communities. In the state of New York, **89%** of all people who are on parole are unemployed at the time of violation. Moreover, a full two-thirds of all released inmates will be rearrested within 3 years, and more than **50%** will be re-incarcerated. At an average annual cost of **\$30,000** per inmate, we all have a stake in getting people coming home from prison into the workforce, instead of back to prison

### OUR STRATEGY

CEO secures employment for people returning from prison, in order to provide the structure, the confidence, and the income necessary for them to lead productive lives within their communities. We believe that the most successful pathway to stable employment is through work itself, which is why we emphasize transitional employment immediately following release from prison or jail. By putting people to work, we are providing them with the foundation they need to address the complicated issues that arise from re-entry.

### HOW IT'S DONE

CEO targets recent parolees in order to initiate our program during the crucial first days of release. Our model includes:



### OUR SUCCESS

CEO demonstrates that people who have been incarcerated have the motivation to find and keep stable employment. CEO prepares over 2,000 people each year to move into mainstream employment. Within 2-3 months, over 65% of CEO participants who begin a job search are placed in permanent jobs. In the past decade, CEO has made 10,000 placements of formerly incarcerated people into full-time employment. And results from an independent research evaluation reveal that people recently released from prison who come to CEO were 50 percent less likely to be reincarcerated for any reason.

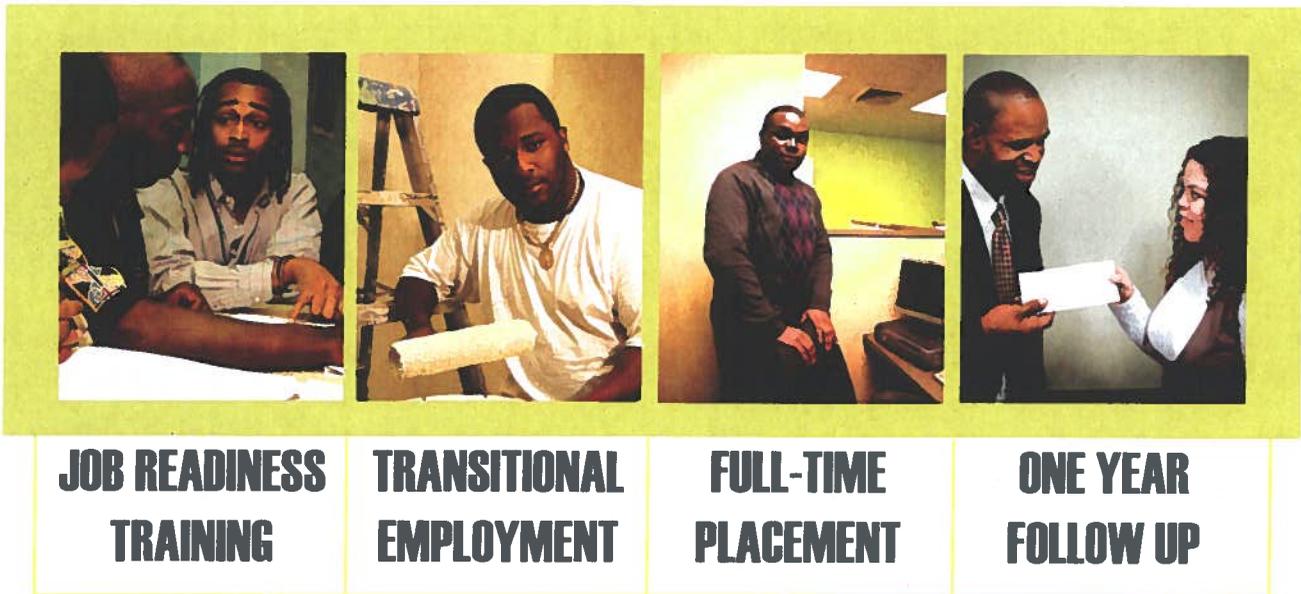
To enroll in CEO Buffalo contact your parole officer

You need a referral form from your Parole Officer  
as well as the following documents:

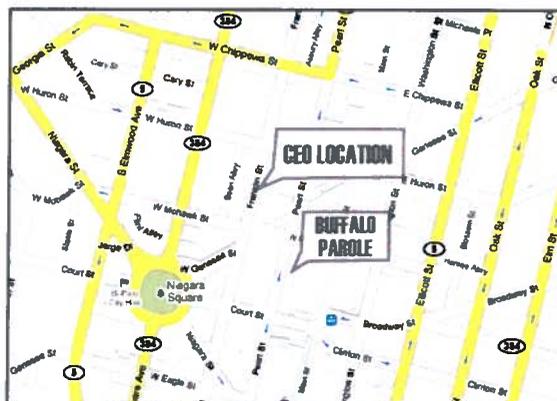
- Release papers
- Social Security Card
- Birth Certificate
- Photo ID

(If you do not have these documents, we can help you obtain them)

## THE CEO MODEL



Orientations for new participants are held throughout the year at  
**170 Franklin Street, 7th Floor, Suite 701 Buffalo, NY 14202**



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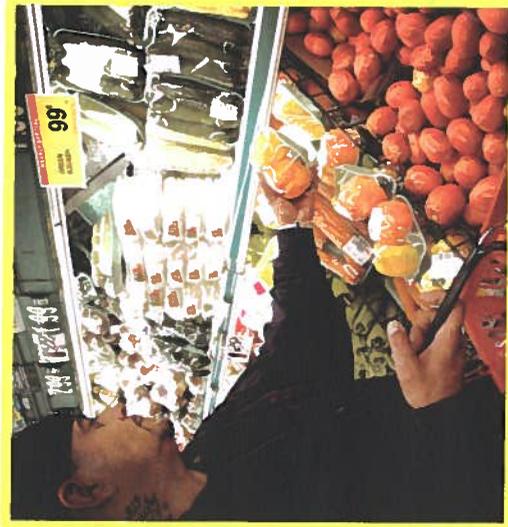
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## POST-PLACEMENT SUPPORT

### RAPID REWARDS PROGRAM

As soon as you obtain employment, call your Employment Specialist and say – "I've got a job, enroll me in Rapid Rewards now!"

For the first year after you find a job – through CEO's help or your own efforts – you can bring your paychecks to CEO to earn rewards just for staying employed.



You remain eligible to receive your rewards as long as you are employed and you are willing to provide us with copies of your pay stubs.

CEO also honors participants accomplishments with retention celebrations.

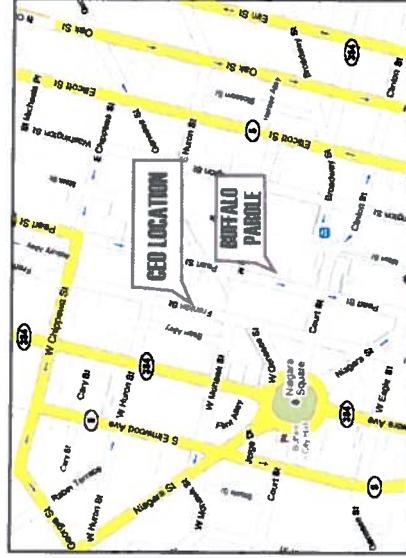
## HOW TO JOIN CEO'S PROGRAM

Orientations for new participants are held throughout the year.

You need to bring the following documents:

- Referral Form from your Parole Officer
- Release papers
- Social Security Card
- Birth Certificate
- Photo ID

(If you do not have them, we can help you obtain these)



**CEO** CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

*change that works*

WEB [www.ceoworks.org](http://www.ceoworks.org)

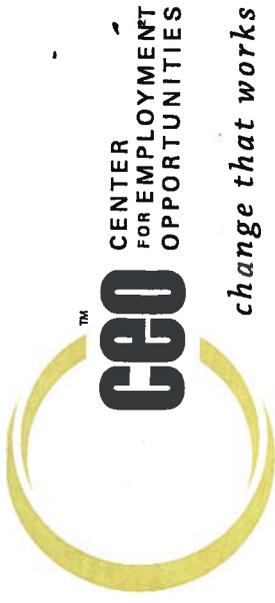
EMAIL [CEOTB@ceoworks.org](mailto:CEOTB@ceoworks.org)

PHONE 716 842 6320 FAX 716 842 6324

MAIL 170 Franklin Street,

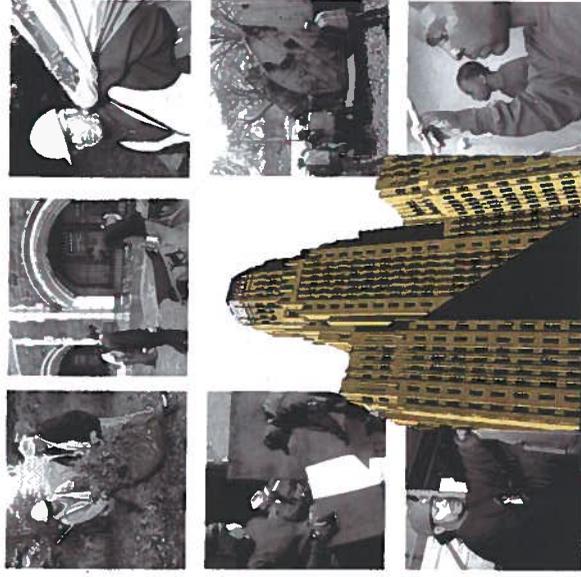
7th Floor, Suite 701

Buffalo, NY 14203



*change that works*

# THE POWER OF WORK



**Get on the right track today with**

## PAROLE AND CEO

**IN BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY**

## PRE-PLACEMENT SUPPORT

### GETTING STARTED

Attend a four-day pre-employment workshop. At the workshop, qualified instructors will teach you:

- How to interview for a job
- How to discuss your conviction and gaps in your work history during an interview
- Resume writing techniques
- Job-searching skills



Upon graduation, you will be assigned to an **Employment Specialist** who will help you with your resume, prepare you for interviews and assist you with your job search.

## TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

### GETTING A PAYCHECK

While working with an Employment Specialist to get a permanent, full-time job, you can start working immediately at a CEO worksite, building your workplace experience and receiving a paycheck daily.



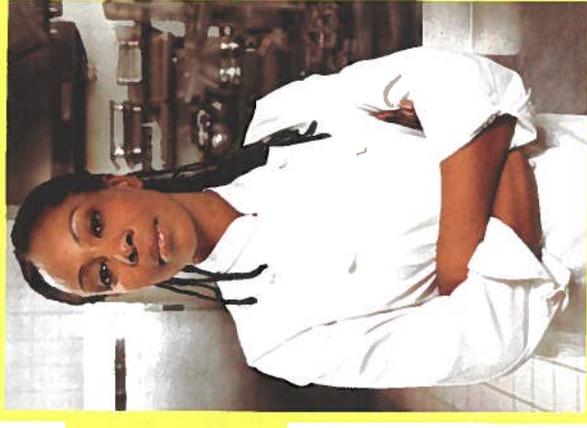
As part of a transitional work crew, you will do the following kinds of work:

- Preparing and painting walls
- Clearing roadside debris
- Graffiti removal, light demolition and building maintenance
- Groundskeeping
- Polishing floors, emptying trash, and dusting office furniture

## PLACEMENT SUPPORT

CEO has a long track record of success in helping people in parole find full-time employment

You will work with our Employment Specialists one on one to plan your job search based on your skills and abilities. Our Employment Specialists will work with employers to match you to the job openings that are best fit for you. Weekly appointments with the Employment Specialists help most people get a job within a few months of enrolling in CEO.



Industries include:

- Customer Service and Hospitality
- Food Service
- Warehouse
- Building Maintenance