

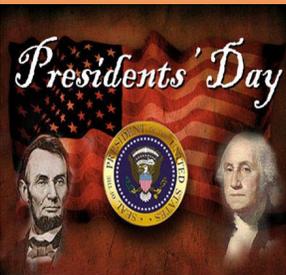
Rapid Responders' e-Bulletin

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE
DIVISION OF WORKFORCE
SOLUTIONS RAPID
RESPONSE TEAM

FEBRUARY 2015

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PRESIDENTS' DAY, OBSERVED ON FEBRUARY 22, MARKS THE BIRTHDAY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON, THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. TODAY, PRESIDENTS' DAY IS AN OCCASION TO HONOR ALL FORMER PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES.

DWS Former Offender Initiative

The Former Offender Initiative (FOI) is designed to assist job seekers with criminal records by providing resources necessary to help former offenders overcome the barriers a record brings. In addition to the transitional barriers that may exist among the state's dislocated worker population, former offenses are often identified during the client engagement meeting. Led by the efforts of Wendi Bowen, Former Offender Initiative/Federal Bonding Program Coordinator with the Division of Workforce Solutions, and well trained staff in the local offices, a number of services are available to the former offender population which may consist of formerly incarcerated customers as well as those who have not served time for a prior offense.

Services provided by DWS staff include: direct one-on-one assistance; group workshops for former offenders; marketing the FOI program to employers; the coordination of a local network of community partners; job referrals and knowledge of employers who are supportive of hiring former felons; state and local prison transition services; and participation in job fairs and re-entry networking groups.

Written resource materials available to support the former offender population include: the *Former Offender Work Search Guide*; *Job Application Tips*; *Employment Application Forms templates*; *Resume Tips*; *Networking Tips*; *How to Make a Good Impression*; and information on how to create a "Letter of Explanation" to disclose a criminal charge or conviction. Job Seeking 101 for Former Offenders workshops are also held frequently at the local offices.

The Federal Bonding Program and Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) provide incentives for employers who may otherwise be hesitant to hire "at risk" individuals; for example those with a criminal record, substance abuse history or bad credit, for fear the employee may cause loss to the company. The Federal Bonding program helps to alleviate that fear by providing insurance for employers when hiring "at risk" employees; protects employers against any type of stealing, theft, forgery, larceny or embezzlement; and requires no fees, deductible, or paperwork. Individual Fidelity Bonds are issued for 6 months in \$5,000 increments. To obtain a Fidelity Bond: a job offer is made to an "at risk" individual; the employer contacts their local workforce office and provides information including the employee's name, position, and start date. The bond is issued and effective on the employee's first day of work. For additional information visit the Federal Bonding website at: <http://www.bonds4jobs.com>

Through the WOTC, Employers may receive a tax credit for hiring employees from any of several target groups, including ex-felons. To qualify, the ex-felon had to be convicted of a felony and hired within one year after the date of the conviction or release from prison. The employer simply completes two forms; IRS Form 8850 and ETA Form 9061, which are forwarded to the DWS Business Services Unit within 28 days of the hire date. Employers can receive a \$2,400 tax credit for any qualified employee who works at least 400 hours, or partial credit for employees who work at least 120 hours. One credit can be claimed for each employee and there is no limit on the number of employees an employer may claim. Other WOTC target groups include: TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients; long-term TANF recipients; veterans (Including vets with a service connected disability, unemployed veterans and those receiving assistance through the Food Stamps program.) Vocational Rehabilitation recipients; Food Stamp recipients; and SSI recipients. For additional information on WOTC visit: <http://www.nccommerce.com/workforce/businesses/work-opportunity-tax-credit>

The DWS FOI team is commended for a 65% employment rate for program year 2013 through the provision of employment services to 6,623 ex-offenders. Of those, 5,535 were registered and counted for purposes of determining outcomes. Through DWS assistance, 3,609 individuals entered employment during the year.

Best Practice Performance by Triangle South

For best supporting role in a rapid response employee transition service strategy, the award goes to Triangle South Workforce Development Board!



Performance Fibers is the world's leading producer of industrial polyester fibers and fabrics and primarily serves the energy, transportation and safety industries. On September 29, an initial rapid response meeting was held with Performance Fibers in New Hill in response to company plans to consolidate its resources from the Chatham County facility to its Salisbury plant resulting in the dislocation of **206** workers. Due to internal job placements, employee retirements and attrition, the number of impacted workers was reduced to **165**. Performance Fibers filed a petition for Trade Adjustment Assistance on behalf of its workers who primarily hold positions in production, maintenance, quality control, and utilities.

The local rapid response strategy was coordinated by Rosalind Cross, Director, and Mike Peluso, Business Services Representative, Triangle South Workforce Development Board, and consisted of two general employee orientation sessions scheduled one week apart, followed by a resource fair at the employer site each day. Approximately **150** workers were in attendance which resulted in partner and employer booths remaining open for an additional hour each day. The NC Mobile Resource Career Center, staffed by local partners, was also stationed in close proximity to the building and facilitated the registration of over **100** workers in NCWorks Online. Employees were paid for the time in which they participated in the rapid response events which included a company catered lunch.

Workers were provided with a canvas Triangle South Workforce Development Board bag filled with information about transitional services and resources available to them. Workforce partners in attendance at the resource fair included NCWorks Career Center staff, Chatham and Lee County Departments of Social Services, Central Carolina Community College Curriculum and Continuing Education departments, North Carolina Foreclosure Prevention Fund, Moncure Community Health Center, NC Unemployment Insurance Program and the Sanford First Baptist Church Job Seekers Support Group. Local hiring employers included: Engineered Plastic Components, Palett One, Lazar Furniture, Kelly Services, Conveyor Technologies, and Frontier Spinning. Triangle Brick and Sanford Contractors previously expressed an interest in hiring some of the impacted workers.

Through an employee focus group, workers expressed their appreciation for the educational and other transitional services available to them. The Triangle South Rapid Response team provided an excellent solution to the common problem faced in employee rapid response service strategies. That is, providing workers with a large amount of information in a short period of time, without overwhelming them at an already confusing time. In my conversations with them, workers naturally conveyed their disappointment in the situation; but expressed their appreciation to the company and the local rapid response team for the tremendous amount of transitional support provided to them.

Together, the Triangle South rapid response team and Performance Fiber company officials laid the foundation for impacted workers to experience a successful transition to new employment. The Triangle South team displayed an efficient best practice model in their response to the Performance Fibers facility closure.

Veterans Services Update

The NCWorks Online job search and referral system's Veterans Service page has recently been revised and expanded. The new site has direct links to information on career fairs and other employment related events, veterans benefits and services, and provides access to numerous veteran affiliate organizations. Veterans in need of more information on veteran employment, career resources, etc. can contact their nearest NCWorks Career Center for additional assistance.

Rapid Response Best Practices Webinar 2015 Series

Please watch for information about the 2015 Rapid Response Best Practices webinar series, *Best Practices for Serving Dislocated Workers: A Hiring Manager Perspective*, which will feature panelist from the employer community who will share with you the critical technical and soft skill needs of their industries, common interview "deal breakers" as well as "deal makers".

N.C. STATS:

WARN NOTICES RECEIVED

For Program Year 2014, the State Dislocated Worker Unit received a total of **50 WARN** notifications covering **3,167 NC** workers.



NCWorks Online

Connecting
Talent to Jobs

www.ncworks.gov



Photo: Geraldine Brady, right, addresses Performance Fibers workers at the Resource Fair.