



This newsletter shares information, policy and program updates and best practice information to 20 County Re-entry Task Forces and community stakeholders.

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- Dutchess
- Erie
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- Monroe
- Nassau
- Niagara
- New York
- Oneida
- Onondaga
- Orange
- Queens
- Rensselaer
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OPCA delivers Workforce Development Specialist Training

On March 8, 2024, OPCA concluded its 21st Workforce Development Specialist (WDS) Training. The diverse group of graduates consisted of professionals from parole, probation, employment-focused services programs, not-for-profit organizations, and county re-entry task forces. The graduating class of 11 was represented by Rensselaer County Parole Re-entry Specialist Jude Mellan, who graduated as valedictorian, and OPCA Community Correction Representative Monica Luciani, who graduated as salutatorian. Our newly DCJS-certified workforce development specialists will join more than 500 of their peers who currently work with justice-involved individuals in employment readiness groups through the 20-hour **Ready, Set, Work!** employment readiness curriculum. Workforce development specialists utilize evidence-based competencies and related skills to assist justice-involved individuals and others with legal histories with making informed decisions; obtaining gainful employment; identifying career paths that compliment strengths, interests, skills/abilities, and values; finding and utilizing educational and occupational opportunities; and offering experiential knowledge of the workforce.



Back row: Frank Cangiano, Michele Clarke, LaShawn Lukes, Tiffany Richardson, Heather Airey, Denina Roman, Monica Luciani, Jude Mellan, Robert Maslowski, and CodyAnne Chambers. *Front row:* Shelyan Madera, Mackenzie Mesuch, Hannah Cross, Mark Pisano, Shermond Reid, and Melinda Vick.

Client Testimonial – Broome County Re-Entry Task Force (CRTF)

Freddy P. was released after serving 24 years in state incarceration. Freddy credits Alison McQuade, CRTF Coordinator, and the Broome County Re-entry Task Force with helping to change his life for the better. He noted that the Task Force had supplied him with hygiene products, gift cards, and a cell phone. Freddy has also received assistance with finding employment, but he advised that what meant the most to him was receiving assistance with obtaining his medication. Freddy shared that being back on his medication is the first step towards success, as it can be a struggle to function without it. Freddy stated, “So, for anyone wondering if the Re-Entry Task Force actually helps? Yes. It basically saved my life, and, for that, I will be forever grateful.”

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For more information on any of the topics mentioned within, to report any difficulties you may have experienced receiving this email, or if you have any information you would like included in the next issue, please contact [Monica Luciani](#).

Past issues of *New York Re-Entry Today* are available on the [DCJS website](#). Bookmark the link!

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Spotlight: Rockland County Re-Entry Task Force

The Rockland Re-Entry Task Force received a grant award from M&T Bank for the Advancing Workforce Equity (AWE) program. With this award, the Task Force is partnering with Dominican University to provide funding for participants to attend a six-week entrepreneurship workshop and receive an entrepreneurship certificate. Participants earning this certificate are eligible for college credits. Clothing and transportation are also provided to the participants at no cost to them. At the conclusion of the program, all participants are eligible to compete to be one of three individuals to win \$5,000 each to start their own business.

Spotlight: Rensselaer County Re-Entry Task Force

On March 15, 2024, The Rensselaer Re-Entry Task Force finished their second cohort of **Ready, Set, Work!** for the 2023-2024 contract year with three graduates. Re-entry Coordinator Heidi Renaud shared that all three individuals shared unique experiences and stories and had very positive attitudes. **Ready Set Work!** Facilitator James Reyling was not only able to keep the participants engaged in each class, but also made each session entertaining and informative! Coordinator Renaud also shared that providing gift cards as incentives, as well as providing food during class, created an engaging environment. Congratulations to the graduates, and best of luck moving forward!



Governor Announcements:

Governor Kathy Hochul announced on February 15 that there will be \$200 million in utility bill relief for New Yorkers. This will be a one-time credit to provide relief to over 8 million metered electric and gas consumers, with \$1.4 billion obtainable to decrease energy bills in 2024. The one-time credit will be distributed to each customer account within approximately 45 days after the funds are allocated to utility providers. There are specific income eligibility requirements to qualify for the one-time credit. Read more about the announcement and income eligibility requirements [here](#).

DCJS Public Safety Symposium

The 2024 Public Safety Symposium will be held at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center in Albany from Tuesday, Sept. 17 – Friday, Sept. 20. Presentations will be delivered by criminal justice professionals, community members, crime analysts, and researchers from all over the country. Stay tuned for registration information in the coming months.