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City of
Indianapolis
Bart Peterson, Mayor



Mayor announces new initiative to link ex-offenders with jobs, support services

IPIC wins \$1 million federal grant to begin Apollo 13: Reentry Success

INDIANAPOLIS - Ex-offenders leaving prison on probation or parole will get help finding a job and overcoming barriers that otherwise may hinder their opportunity for employment under a new initiative gearing up in the city, Mayor Bart Peterson announced today.

Apollo 13: Reentry Success will serve 225 people ages 18 to 29 who are returning to Marion County's neighborhoods from state prison or community corrections. Apollo 13 is made possible by a \$1 million grant to the Indianapolis Private Industry Council Inc., one of only five in the country awarded recently by the U.S. Department of Labor.

"Two weeks ago, I announced a comprehensive plan to aggressively fight drugs, gangs and illegal guns in Indianapolis. But in addition to enforcement, crime prevention strategies also enhance public safety," Peterson said. "A powerful way to reduce recidivism among ex-offenders is to offer them both the skills and opportunity to make an honest living. Apollo 13 will link ex-offenders to comprehensive employment services at virtually the moment they walk out of prison or jail gates."

IPIC, the Workforce Investment Board for Marion County, formed partnerships with the Marion Superior Court Probation Department and the Marion County Community Corrections' Community Transition Program to get referrals for Apollo 13. Ex-offenders released on probation from state prison are required to report to the court within two days of their release, where they are assigned to services appropriate for or required of them. Apollo 13 will be among the programs to which ex-offenders may be referred. Similarly, ex-offenders emerging from the Community Transition Program, who were sent there by a judge in the final phase of their incarceration, will be referred to Apollo 13.

A client will register with the WorkOne system, which IPIC oversees in Marion County, where he or she will undergo a series of assessments of skills, aptitudes and challenges. After appropriate services are identified and a plan to deliver them is developed, the client may choose to receive them from one of five community- or faith-based organizations with which IPIC has partnered for the project. The providers - Fathers and Families Center; Horizon House; Workforce Inc.; Oasis of Hope; and PACE/OAR - all offer work-readiness training, career counseling and follow-up services in a variety of methods and settings.

"IPIC and our partners regularly work with at-risk people, so we're excited about this opportunity to tailor services to help ex-offenders reach success," said Bob Palmer, chairman of the IPIC Board of Directors. "Our other work has allowed us to forge partnerships with businesses that are willing to give ex-offenders a second chance and to understand what industries and occupations are open to people with criminal histories. This experience and information will converge to cause this project - and its clients - to succeed."

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Johnny Rivers, who spent three years in prison for drug offenses, came to Fathers and Families Center after his release, where he received services similar to those that will be provided by Fathers and Families and the other partners through Apollo 13. He was placed in one job, then found a better one that he kept for nearly two years. Although he left that job about two months ago, he is attending Fathers and Families' job club and looking for work.

"I had made up my mind and didn't want to go back to prison," Rivers said. "I decided if I put some positive in, I'd get some positive out."

The grant allows IPIC and its partners to map out the project over the next four months, with services beginning in November and offered for a year, with six months of follow-up for each client. Grant funds may be renewable.

Evelyn Ridley-Turner, a lawyer who rose through the ranks of the justice system to serve as commissioner of the Indiana Department of Correction from February 2001 to January 2005, will manage Apollo 13. She began her career of more than 35 years in county court as an advocate for unwed mothers and a probation officer for juveniles.