



Mike DeWine, Governor | Jim Tressel, Lt. Governor | Matt Damschroder, Director

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Second Chance Month

**Ohio Offers Free Employment Services for Restored Citizens
and Employers Willing to Give Them Second Chances**

COLUMBUS, OHIO – April is Second Chance Month, and Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, Lt. Governor Jim Tressel, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Matt Damschroder, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) Director Annette Chambers-Smith, and Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) Director Amy Ast are joining together in reminding Ohioans that the state offers a variety of free employment services for individuals reentering society after serving time.

“There are plenty of people who have paid their debt to society and are ready to be positive contributors to our workforce,” said Governor DeWine. “I personally had the opportunity to work alongside someone who had spent many years in prison before his release, and he was one of the hardest working people I have ever met. I say to the employers in Ohio: give these people a chance.”

“Ohio has several programs preparing inmates to reenter the workforce through specialized job training for the state’s most in-demand industries,” said Lt. Governor Tressel. “Now, we need Ohio employers to hire these people. We need to help them find the dignity, purpose, and hope that comes with a job.”

“Ohio believes in giving people second chances, and we encourage restored citizens and those nearing their release to take advantage of all the free services available at OhioMeansJobs.com and the state’s OhioMeansJobs Centers,” Damschroder said. “Hiring justice-involved individuals also can be beneficial for employers. Many have found their formerly incarcerated employees to be more motivated to succeed, more loyal to the organization, and less likely to quit.”





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Employers who hire workers with criminal histories may qualify for federal tax credits through the [Work Opportunity Tax Credit \(WOTC\)](#) program. In addition, employers can request a fidelity bond at no cost to reduce any possible financial risks from hiring individuals with a criminal past.

The state's career and job search website, [OhioMeansJobs.com](#), includes a section with [resources specifically for restored citizens](#). In addition, 13 state correctional facilities now have certified in-house OhioMeansJobs Centers. Justice-involved individuals can go there to improve their skills, search job listings, and connect to services in their home county so they will be ready to start working as soon as they return to the community. They may also receive job training while incarcerated, including registered apprenticeships, certificate programs, and even college degrees. Federal rules allow justice-involved individuals to access financial aid through the Second Chance Pell Grant.

ODJFS and DRC have collaborated to create training programs for in-demand jobs in broadband and 5G installation, occupations needed to implement high-speed network access statewide. ODJFS and DRC are also collaborating to offer credential training in robotics and electronics engineering at the Lorain and Grafton Correctional Institutions. Lorain Community College will conduct these trainings. They are designed to give justice-involved individuals the skills and knowledge necessary to find jobs in these high-demand, industry-recognized career fields.

“DRC has the workforce that Ohio needs,” said DRC Director Annette Chambers-Smith. “Around 18,000 people leave our institutions every year, and we know that employment is a determinant of their future success. Our staff work hard to prepare our population before they are released so they are ready to hit the ground running. Many leave with all the certifications, training, and experience they need to be ready to work from day one. I want to thank ODJFS, DYS, and our reentry coalitions for all their work in helping people reenter their communities.”

Ohio Reentry Connections – a secure, specialized version of OhioMeansJobs.com – can help justice-involved individuals obtain employment after their release. When they are within 90 days of their release, they can make their resume active in the system. This allows employers to contact them regarding possible job opportunities. Incarcerated individuals can also take a pre-release assessment when they are within six months of their scheduled release. This allows them to receive pre- and post-release services from an employment professional at the OhioMeansJobs Center in their returning county.

Ohio Reentry Connections, [OhioMeansJobs.com](#), and the DRC Reentry Resource Portal can help make the return of justice-involved citizens to their communities easier and more successful. The DRC Reentry Resource Portal provides resources and information on housing, education, jobs, and other support services. OhioMeansJobs.com and local OhioMeansJobs Centers offer career planning and





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exploration services, assessments to identify possible future occupations, and information about budgeting and financial decisions.

“Here at DYS, we believe in second chances. We are educationally and professionally preparing the justice-involved youth at our facilities as it is essential for their reentry into our communities,” said DYS Director Amy Ast. “We offer a variety of services for the youth, including through our three high schools and our OhioMeansJobs Centers at our facilities. We also offer skill certifications, industry credentials, and more to properly educate and provide them with the skills they need to obtain an in-demand job here in Ohio upon their release.”

For more information, visit [Job Services for Restored Citizens | Job and Family Services \(ohio.gov\)](https://www.ohio.gov/jodfs).

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, adult protective services, and child support services.

