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PROJECT E3 ZOOM WEBINAR

CONNECTING RETURNING CITIZENS TO EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

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>> TERRY DONOVAN: So welcome, everyone, to our afternoon session on Connecting Returning Citizens to Employment Resources. Many of you joined us this morning for the first webinar in this two-part Justice Systems Reentry VR mini-conference that we are doing today, so for those of you that are rejoining us, welcome back. For those of you just coming on this afternoon or late afternoon, welcome.

A couple of items before we get started. My name is Terry Donovan with the Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute. Joining me today from Stout to help with managing the webinar, Heidi Decker-Maurer and Beth Gaertner. Heidi will be managing the Chat function, and I will make a note, we've noticed a little bit at webinars, if you have a chat or a comment that you would like the rest of the attendees to take a look at, you are sharing a resource that's occurring in your state, activities, maybe some statistics you'd like participants from around the country to know about, make sure when you fill out your chat to look to see that you send it to panelists and attendees. If you just have a note for a panelist, then just click on Panelist, and it will just come to the four or five of us. So just a reminder there.

For those of you that have been with us before, we offer one CRC credit for our webinars. At the end of the session, Beth, who is going to facilitate the question and answers, she'll tell you a little bit more about the CRC. And in relation to question and answer, Beth will be facilitating that. Please put your questions in the Q&A box as Kimberly and Randy go through their presentation. You can also add them as we get to the Q&A. We will not be taking any questions -- let me say we won't be answering any questions during the presentation, and we then will start the live Q&A with Randy and Kimberly when they conclude their presentation. Why they if there's too much else, so with that, I'll turn it over to Randy and Kimberly for this afternoon's session. Thanks very much.

>> RANDY LOSS: Thank you, Terry.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Thank you. Randy and I would like to welcome you to this afternoon's session, Connecting Returning Citizens to Employment Resources.

Your PowerPoint.

>> RANDY LOSS: Sorry. Hold on a second. Sorry, that's right.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: I just realized it wasn't up.

>> RANDY LOSS: Hold on one moment. I will share the screen. There we go.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: There we go. So this is by Project E3: Educate Empower, and Employ.

Next slide. Again, this is Connecting Returning Citizens to Employment Resources. Again, I am Kimberly Gerlach. I work for the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. I am a program specialist. I have been with the state for a little over seven years now. My current role is that I am the BJJS statewide specialist, and I also cover the adult reentry, so this is part of what I do on a daily basis. Randy?

>> RANDY LOSS: Again, my name is Randy Loss. I used to work for the Pennsylvania VR agency. I am currently with the state mental health agency. I am the employment first lead. And I am working on all things that are employment related in regards to supported employment, supported education that are dealing with persons with mental illness in the State of Pennsylvania. By the way, BJJS, I know Kimberly mentioned it, that's the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services, BJJS for short.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So our objectives today are that you are going to learn about the needed partners to successfully transition individuals from incarceration to the community. We are also going to teach you to identify common issues facing citizens as they return to communities. We are also going to help you gain knowledge to find resources available for returning citizens so that they may experience success in employment. And we are also going to learn about different emerging models of reentry with several states.

We are going to start off with a poll question. What we are wanting to know is what percentage of your caseload has a criminal case record? Is it 0 to 25%, 25 to 50, 50 to 75, or 75 to 100% of your caseload has somebody with a criminal record?

>> RANDY LOSS: We'll take another 15 to 20 seconds for folks to answer that. Not surprising, it's very similar, the numbers we are seeing, similar to what we saw this morning with folks working with individuals in the juvenile justice system.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: I do have somebody that just put in chat that their case load is 100%.

>> RANDY LOSS: Oh, wow.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Uh-huh.

>> RANDY LOSS: So it looks like basically 70% of the people indicated that it's 0 to 25%. We feel that it's important, even if you are working with one individual in your caseload that has a criminal record, to be able to know what are resources that are available to these individuals. And just to take a step back really quick, in regards to the term we used in our objectives, we are calling returning citizens. A lot of systems call them ex-offenders, ex-inmates, whatnot. We want to use positive language. We also

want to use people-first language. And Philadelphia actually started, I think was the first large city that started using "returning citizen," because really we want to help the person return to the community, and we want to help them return to being a citizen as part of society.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So we are going to go on to some definitions. We want to make sure these are clearly defined and everybody is on the same page. You will see as we go through our presentation we are going to keep coming back to these words. So there is a big difference between probation and parole. Probation is usually somebody that is a first-time offense, minor offenses, they can get put on probation. It's usually court-ordered supervision instead of being sentenced to prison time. Where parole, that is somebody that's been incarcerated, usually in a state prison. Let's say they've gotten a sentence of a maximum of five years. Maybe they are getting out after two and a half years on good behavior, whatever. They will serve the other two and a half years of their sentence on parole with a parole agent.

Your summary offenses, those are your most minor types of offenses. Those are usually non-traffic violations. Those can be things such as disorderly conduct, loitering, harassment, those kinds of charges. Usually they may end up in a fine. They don't end up in jail time.

Your infractions, those are the least serious types of crimes. Again, these can result in fines. It's usually somebody breaking a law. There's usually no jail time associated with these either, but this can be something along the lines of trespassing, littering, disturbing the piece. Traffic tickets are included in here. That's where infractions fall.

Your misdemeanors and your felonies, those are where you are going to start seeing your jail time. So a misdemeanor is usually a criminal offense that carry as jail time of less than a year for most states. Your state may be a little bit different. But in general terms, usually it is less than a year. And it's usually served in a county jail. Your felonies -- and I will say I know that some misdemeanors can be longer than that, and some misdemeanors could be in state jail. Your felonies, that is going to be in a state prison or a federal prison, and usually those are more than a year. I know that here in PA, pretty much you know that the difference between -- if somebody is coming out of prison, if they come to me and say they served over two years, I automatically know that pretty much guaranteed they are coming out of a state prison because here that's where the defining line is 24 months or more you are going to be in a state prison. If it's less than 24-month sentence, you are going to be serving that in a county jail. So your felonies and misdemeanors are broken down into classes. A misdemeanor may be a misdemeanor Class A, B, or C, where a felony will be broken down into

classes of A, B, C, D, or E. Usually those classes in a felony are broken down according to the amount of time you are going to be serving for your felony.

>> RANDY LOSS: One thing I want to add to that -- thank you, Kimberly -- is in order to unpack that, what is the person's criminal offense, it's really advantageous for you to talk to the probation or parole officer. They are more than willing to share information, and likely the information they can share you can't get from anywhere else. Because they are agents of the court, so they have ready access to this information. And again, individuals that are in a criminal justice system, their oral history might not be the best, so you might not know what is truly the case. They might indicate they don't know but they do, but they are trying to possibly hide it or find ways around what they have so they can get things that they legally aren't able to access. So best thing to do is talk to your probation or parole officer. They are going to be a great resource in regards to getting the down-low on what the person's criminal record truly is.

Now, moving on to the mission and vision statements, we are going from some very high-level stuff, just like we did with the juvenile justice one in the morning, we did some national type stuff. We did some generalized terms. We are doing the very same thing for what's happening with the adult system, so we are going to talk about stuff at high level, stuff that many states have commonalities in terms of definitions, and every state, every agency, every department usually has what are called mission and vision statements. The reason we are bringing these up is this is kind of your connector in terms of if you are trying to collaborate with partners. Where can I start collaborating? What are the types of things I can use to my advantage to be able to make those collaborations? It starts at the foundational level of mission and vision statements. And the mission statement should guide the actions of the organization, spell out its overall goal, what do you do, provide a path, what can you provide to get the person to those goals, and guide decision-making. How do we go about accomplishing these things?

Vision statement is much narrower, future oriented, declaration of the organization's purpose and aspirations. And I have here a couple mission and vision statements I pulled from the State of North Carolina, again, trying to bring the funnel down. This

What we have listed here are Department of Health and Human Services, where their state VR agency lies, and the Department of Public Safety, where the Department of Corrections and the juvenile justice system lie within North Carolina. And I am not going to read all this information, but I do want to mention the stuff that's highlighted, like the word "collaboration" in the mission statement of Human Services is listed in the Department of Public Safety's vision statement. So there is a connector there between the two

partners in regards to they want to collaborate. That's great. Use it as a talking point to be able to make it to the next level to be able to actually collaborate to develop those relationships with your partners across the aisle in the criminal justice system.

I have highlighted in green for the mission statement of the Department of Public Safety, I have "develop progressively responsible behavior." Very similar terminology to the DHHS, the human services, vision statement where I highlight "promote well-being" for all. There are connectors there, there are components that exist that are threads that you take to weave together to weave that collaboration.

Also another tool is what's called a memorandum of understanding. It's a very important tool that you can use. It's a critical collaboration tool that identifies roles and responsibilities. Funding could be a component. We will talk more about that just briefly. We had done that in our juvenile justice session in the morning. The state VR agency and the juvenile justice agency for the state collaborated together to develop a \$3.1 million-a-year memorandum of understanding. What's so important about the memorandum of understanding, it says "provides consistency." So if Kimberly is going to provide service A, and me, Randy, are going to provide service B, whether it's to Sally or Harry or Tom or Jerry, we are providing the same service, and if we are in different departments or different agencies or agencies within different departments, we are making sure that whatever we do we telegraph and we talk to the other person. So Kimberly is talking to me, I am talking to her. Yes, I did this for Tom. You need to do that for Tom. Yes, did I this for Jerry. You need to do that for Jerry. A memorandum of understanding puts in writing what has to happen, when it has to happen, who is providing the service, and what it's going to happen. What's nice about memorandums of understanding, it can usually cover a state, cover agencies, and cover services. So if you are doing a service, say, in Pittsburgh, PA, a person in Philadelphia, PA, is getting the same services from the partner in the memorandum of understanding because it's in writing. The old saying is if it's not written down, it's as if it doesn't exist. This helps people collaborate. We will talk more about the memorandum of understanding later in the presentation.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So we are going to go on to our second polling question, and we want to know who do you think your potential partners are? Is it probation? Is it parole? Is it corrections? Drug and alcohol councilors? Is it district attorneys? Or is it all of the above?

Randy, I have seen a couple of chats come in saying probation and parole. I have seen some come in saying all of the above.

>> RANDY LOSS: We'll wait another five or so second to finish

up the poll. Don't be shy, folks. Please feel free to jump in and cast your lot.

Okay. Yes, the answer is all the above. That is correct. I notice a lot of people didn't list the district attorney's office, and I say that while yes, probation and parole are definitely partners, as I mentioned a few moments ago, drug and alcohol counselors, yes, definitely important because substance abuse is disability. Corrections officers, yes. What they are doing on the inside can have an effect on what happens on the outside. But I want to ask you folks to consider the district attorney's office, even though many of you answered all the above. Not many people put down district attorney's office. The district attorney's office, they are the organization at the county level, at the state level, that's going to be determining what level of crime are we going to charge this person with in the court of law. So if you can work with the district attorney's office, the one who is setting up what is the crime, what is the charge that's going to be put against this person, and help them understand the nature of the disability, the extent of the disability, the challenges of trauma. I am not asking to go to the district attorney's office and ask for a pass, but helping them to understand what is going on in this person's life. You know? Substance abuse, yeah, it's more than just a criminal charge, but it's something that has some disability-related aspects to it. Mental health. The largest mental health facilities in the country today are state prisons. Why is that? Because so many people that have mental health issues are ending up, they are offending laws and society laws of the community, they are being charged, they are put in prison.

That shouldn't be, and how can we help to turn that tide? We need to talk to the district attorneys, make them familiar with who we are as an organization, let them see that there may be alternatives that can be brought to the situation if VR can be involved. So it's very important that the district attorney's office be considered as well. Again, everybody's important in this conversation, but I just wanted to throw that out there for consideration.

What we are going to do next is talk about North Carolina resources and potential collaborators. Again, we are trying to bring that funnel down from the state level, from national types of perspectives, from more general perspectives, to talk about what's going on at the state level. Then when we get to Penn, Kimberly and I are going to be talking about what's happening at the local level, you know, whether it's impacting the needs of the individuals.

So with North Carolina, back in 2017, they developed a North Carolina Reentry Action Plan, and the premise behind it is to facilitate transition to society and identify resource gaps, and at the end of 2017, there were 14 Reentry Councils across the State of North Carolina, and they were receiving both state and federal

funding. Also, there's 20 councils that are across North Carolina right now, so I think it's important to find out what those -- excuse me -- reentry councils are doing right now in terms of how they are trying to identify resource gaps. They are probably looking for partners such as VR. How can they facilitate transition to society?

So again, transition, while it's something that's very relevant to students with disabilities that are transitioning from high school to work or high school to postsecondary school, it's also very relevant to people that are leaving the criminal justice system. Again, it's a different transition of sorts, but still, many of the supports that they need are very similar to help them be successful.

Now, the state reentry council partners in North Carolina are the Department of Justice, which makes sense; office of the courts, again, district attorneys, agents of the court; health and human services, where VR lies in North Carolina; Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions. Again, that makes sense, being able to get training, able to get job opportunities in front of these individuals. The college system, again, a very critical component because I know, especially working in the mental health field, education helps an individual lift themselves out of poverty. If they have a postsecondary certification, degree, something that is postsecondary, it's going to give them the skills that are going to get them better pay, so that's very important to have them as a partner. Lastly, the Department of Transportation, Division of Motor Vehicles, again, having an ID, having a driver's license, very critical partners to have in that conversation.

So I am going to see if this will work. Sorry to experiment on you folks. This is a map of North Carolina. I am going to click on the map, and it should open up the link, an active link, an interactive map. There we go. If I click on a specific county -- sorry, COVID-19 is everywhere. I am not going to click on an actual county because it's going to take me to the link, [capitalreentry.org](http://capitalreentry.org) link. But this is an interactive map of the 20 programs that have started across the state and provides points of contact, provides different services being offered, it provides information that speaks to what is available for the returning citizen that can help them to return to the community safely and with success? So I will close this out.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So Randy, did you click on the map?

>> RANDY LOSS: I did. Nothing happened?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: It didn't come up.

>> RANDY LOSS: Is anything showing up at all?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Just the PowerPoint page. I just want you to be aware.

>> RANDY LOSS: Okay. Thank you. I'll just close this out, then. Hold on one second, please.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: While you are doing that, somebody did put

in the chat, they did ask: Does every state have a Reentry Council? They do; don't they?

>> RANDY LOSS: Yes, every state should have a Reentry Council.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Maybe not every county.

>> RANDY LOSS: And I am not sure. Can you see my screen? What can you see?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: I can.

>> RANDY LOSS: Is the PowerPoint up?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: You need to start the slide show.

>> RANDY LOSS: Sorry about that. It took us back. Well, that was an experiment, folks. I do apologize on that. But yes, every state has a Reentry Council. There is federal funding from the Department of Justice, and much of it started in 1974 with the juvenile justice Act of 1974, the federal government started issuing funds to states to develop these types of organizations, both at the state level and at the county level, to be able to devise ways to help individuals re-enter society, whether they be juveniles or whether they be adults. It's morphed into now it's both juveniles and adults. Again, back in 1974, when it first started, it was just primarily juveniles. But the systems have seen a need, and as the program has evolved, they've seen that it's also needed for adults. So every state does have an organization that has federal funds issued for grants to develop reentry programming for your state. So again, if you look at the presentation we had done in the morning for juvenile justice, we talked about that. You have to look. It's different for each state. What the juvenile justice grant funding organization, you are going to find your thread that's going to take you to these types of programs. So again, this is the organization in North Carolina, in Pennsylvania it's the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. In North Carolina, it's called the Governor's Crime Commission, GCC. It's the chief criminal justice advisory body to the Governor and the Secretary of Public Safety. There are several committees. One is in regards to criminal justice improvement, one is in regards to crime victim services, and the third is juvenile justice. And they have funding. As you can see, in 2018, they issued \$100 million in grants across the state of North Carolina. Again, not every state has that much money for their programs, but every state does issue those types of things, those types of grants across their state for reentry.

So fair chance hiring law, I am going to turn it over to you.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: I am just seeing in the chat people are sharing their reentry resources. Thank you for sharing those resources. It's awesome that you guys are connecting all these things.

So the Fair Chance Hiring Law, this is North Carolina. It was actually their -- it's Senate Bill 562, and that was passed in May 8 of 2019. So basically what this did is it had automatic expungement



for certain criminal charges. It has an expungement of nonviolent misdemeanor convictions after seven years of good behavior, and it has expungement of nonviolent felony after ten years of good behavior. This goes back to our definitions prior for misdemeanor and felonies. So when the charges are expunged, it's not available to the public, but it is still available to the district attorneys, and it can be considered by the courts for sentencing if a person reoffends.

>> RANDY LOSS: I just want to say I think it's important in regards to having these types of laws. Not every state has these types of laws. I think in the wake of what we've seen over the past few weeks, states are going to be moving towards these types of laws because we want to be able to make sure that individuals aren't judged on their past behavior but what they are currently doing. And a lot of what happens in laws today, they are very punitive in the adult system, so much so that it affects them not just while they are incarcerated, but because of their felony, misdemeanor, or whatever, the punitive nature of what they are charged with continues on. Businesses won't hire them because they have a felony or a misdemeanor or criminal record. These are efforts states are taking which I am excited to see. They are going to help turn the tide for these individuals.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: That's exactly why it's called second chance, it's giving them that second chance.

I do want to say for the North Carolina, when I was doing the research for this, the nonviolent misdemeanor and the nonviolent felony, how your state defined that, it didn't make any changes to the definitions for those terms.

>> RANDY LOSS: Again, what you are going to have to do for those folks on the webinar today, you are going to have to do a little research, look at what your states are doing in this regard. Second chance, fair chance, use those kinds of definitions, Google them for your state to find out what your state is doing in regards to trying to undo very punitive laws. Like in Pennsylvania, if you have a felony, it either is taken from you after age 70 or after you've been dead for seven years. It's very punitive in Pennsylvania. You can ask for a pardon, work towards expungement, but both are very difficult and cost money. So for folks in many cases in poverty, that's not a good direction for them to go. These types of laws are critical. Anything you can do to promote these types of laws in your state I highly recommend.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: We are going to talk about PA's changes coming up.

>> RANDY LOSS: The Transitional Aftercare Network, TAN for short, this is something that's in North Carolina, but again, many states have these programs. It's an initiative from the Department of Public Safety within the state of North Carolina, and it's

partnering and collaborating with community organizations. It trains individuals, agencies, and organizations to mentor inmates. Again, just like peer mentoring, which is a pre-ETS service, it's something that's powerful no matter what age you are. If you have some deficiencies in your social skills, having a mentor come along side you and help develop those skills is critical. So having a program like this, in Pennsylvania, we have certified peer specialists. That's a Medicaid billable service, something that my agency, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, promoted. It's now a Medicaid billable service. This is something similar to that, but this is volunteers. We'll talk more about what Pennsylvania has done to develop a forensic peer, a Medicaid billable service, but also be able to provide peer services on the inside of the institutions.

So again, these are some initiatives, some programs that they are value added. You might only be a rock against an asteroid to help the trajectory move just ever so slightly, but the more movement you can make with the more rocks you can throw against that asteroid or that person's life, the more of the trajectory can be changed towards positive, life-sustaining wages, being a part of their community, being a productive citizen.

Now we are going to skip this slide right now and go to questions at the end. So we'll move on to Pennsylvania resources and collaborators.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So you have heard Randy and I talk about some things at a higher level, national level so they are we are going to get into PA resources and collaborators.

>> RANDY LOSS: What we have listed here, even though this is something from the federal Department of Justice, it is the training arm of the Department of Justice. It's called the National Institute of Corrections. It's a resource that Pennsylvania tapped into back in 2010. It's a series of trainings. I was part of the first team that got trained. We went out of state to train. It was three weeks at the time when I did the training. But it's called the Offender Workforce Development Specialist, OWDS for short. Right now in its current state, it's two weeks in person and a practicum for a total of 12 weeks. It's very intense, as Kimberly can tell you herself. She went through the training as well. Intense enough that you can gain three college credits. But what is really so powerful about this is it takes a team of professionals, you know, VR, probation officers, welfare office, county assistance offices, workforce folks, corrections folks, community and civic organizations staff, service providers, come together locally. It's usually people that are like one- or two- or three-county region. They come together to develop a strategic plan, and they implement that plan. It's a very powerful thing because it's looking at many different perspectives of that individual's life, needs that need to be

addressed to help them be successful. And I can think of one specific example of a teen that developed a job fair in Reading, Pennsylvania. They developed a -- they called it time offender friendly, but it's now a returning citizen job fair.

They put a couple caveats in it. They said to individuals if you want to participate in this, you have to go through some free coursework to make sure that we feel you are ready to go and make applications for jobs. So I call it the Golden Ticket, just like Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. You had to have this ticket saying yes, I took this five precourses in advance. I am ready to interview today during this job fair. Also, too, some aspects of what they've done that made it very helpful is they had hair stylist there is to cut people's hair. They had people doing mock interviews, people helping them brush up resumes at the job fair so these people were actually ready. They weren't just showing up to businesses acting as employers to hire these folks. It was a community effort to help these individuals put their lives back together. So again, I can't say enough about the Offender Workforce Development Specialist. It's a great training. If it's something that you are interested in, you can definitely talk to Kimberly or myself afterwards about this. We are both trainers. We've done this before. It's a very powerful course to help develop strategic plans to help people get employment with criminal records.

Also, there is a two-day course called a Reentry Employment Specialist, RES for short. Again, it's a very condensed version of the OWDS, and we bring in specifically partners from different disciplines, different fields of study -- again, probation, corrections, VR, workforce, county assistance offices, welfare, community providers -- to come together and have the conversation about what do we need to do as a team to start people thinking about what resources need to be in place to help this person be successful?

And just an example, what Pennsylvania has done since 2010, we train hundreds of professionals. We trained 150 individuals, professionals, in the Offender Workforce Development Specialist. We trained over 500 individuals in the Reentry Employment Specialist training, and why it's important that we are mentioning this is this is something that is foundational, starts a conversation, but it helps you define what you need to do, helps you create the narrative, helps you develop a strategic plan, which then you can implement and you can see it helps to move the needle in the lives of individuals with criminal records.

So in regards to the next item we have, I mentioned about the memorandum of understanding. Pennsylvania OVR, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Corrections, developed a memorandum of understanding in 2011, 2012, and what it was designed to do was to obtain records, medical records, psychological records, educational records, vocational records, in a consistent fashion

because we have 25 facilities, state facilities, across Pennsylvania; 46 or 47 thousand inmates; and 15 OVR field offices across Pennsylvania. So how do we make those connections? How do we get consistency in terms of what's coming to us when we make the request for documentation and what the expectation is from DOC when we make that request? We had to put an MOU in place that listed everything out. You know, Form A, Form B, Form C, you know, that would consistently provide the information we needed to be able to determine eligibility much more quickly. Also we had to find out who were the points of contact within the state correctional institutions because, again, there are 16,000 people, staff, in these 25 facilities across Pennsylvania. How do we define who gets the information, the request, and who sends it out. So we had to define that as well.

Kimberly, as you mentioned when we were talking about this, it didn't necessarily give everything a person needed for determining eligibility, but it was able to give some good starting information; correct?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Yeah. Well, the information that DOC does provide to us is the information they give us allows us to be able to determine that initial eligibility. We definitely would receive enough medical records and enough of their history that that initial eligibility can be done. There may be things that you find out from that customer when you meet with them that you may need to get additional medical records or you may need to get additional information, and you may need to update that eligibility at a later time. But part of that, like you said, was we -- through the MOU, we told them that we would determine their eligibility within 60 days, and those records definitely give us the ability to do that. So yeah.

>> RANDY LOSS: And one more component of what had to be in place to make the MOU successful or make the MOU work, function, was we got permission from the Deputy Secretary of Corrections to be able to get records from Department of Corrections at no cost.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Yes.

>> RANDY LOSS: In many cases, when let's say a lawyer is requesting medical records or requesting records from the Department of Corrections, they charge them 25 cents a page or more. This was big for our department to be able to get these records at cost because having to pay hundreds of dollars for this information, depending how big the files were, it allowed us to put money towards rehabilitation as opposed to documentation. Again, those are components of what can be seen as successful memorandums of understanding in your state working with your Department of Corrections, getting information consistently so you can determine eligibility more quickly, and a you can get a plethora of information, you know, their educational records, vocational -- you know, if they started an HVAC program but, say, they need three or four modules to

complete, at least you have the record of what modules did they complete, and you can use that to connect to training programs in the community so that they can finish their HVAC certification as opposed to starting over.

Another initiative that was done with the Department of Corrections, I mentioned earlier we talked about the TAN, the volunteer training program or volunteer mentoring program in North Carolina, this is a program that the state organization that provides grants to different rehabilitation programs for people with criminal records, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, they provided in 2011 a grant to develop forensic peers in state correctional institutions. So the initial grant was issued in 2011. It was to train a hundred individuals, inmates, sometimes some of them are lifers, mean they were never going to get out, but they felt it was going to be something that's going to help them help others who can be successful in leaving the facilities. Again, the initial project was to train 100, but since that time, over 500 individuals have been trained, and for those who have gotten out that have that certification, I can say there are many of them that are actually employed as forensic peer specialists in the community. They are getting a full-time position. I can think of one specifically out of Philadelphia, great gentleman, powerful story, and his ability to have that certification to be able to help others and also make an income is a very, very powerful thing.

And again, what it's doing is helping those with mental illness to be better prepared for the community.

Another thing that was done was establishment of federal benefits MOU. The they developed a memorandum of understanding so when Johnny Smith is getting out of the state corrections facility, his benefits are expedited, turned on more quickly than what had been done in times past. So again, that's a memorandum understanding. It provides consistency of what's going to happen for that individual when they are being released.

And lastly, the Bureau of Community Corrections, that's another component of our state Department of Corrections. Kimberly mentioned about individuals maybe serving two and a half years of a five-year sentence, being out under parole for the remainder, the other two and a half years. Now, some individuals don't have what are called home plans, meaning they burned their bridges, they don't have a place to go, and they need someplace to stay. It's almost like a halfway house. These individuals go there, and they typically are there until the conditions of parole are done or that two and a half of the five-year sentence is done. What's nice about that is they have more freedoms. They are no longer considered inmates but are considered parolees. So they can find employment in the community. The only challenge with that is if they are in, say, Philadelphia at a Bureau of Community Corrections facility but they

live in Pittsburgh, once they are done with their sentence, they've gotten to their five-year sentence and they are now released into their own recognizance, if they have a job in Philadelphia but they are going back to Pittsburgh, it makes it very difficult in terms of issues with transferring the VR case. That's something to keep in mind as well.

Again, as you are getting more connected with your state Department of Corrections or whatever they call it in your state, the state prison, what are the challenges that people are facing as they are leaving the facilities, and how can you be mindful of that so you can help the individual plug into the system, help the individual be successful?

I will turn it over to you, Kimberly. You are on mute. There we go.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Sorry, I was answering questions in the chat.

>> RANDY LOSS: No problem.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: In the Q&A, sorry, not in the Chat.

So things that are happening inside of the SCIs here in Pennsylvania, I've got listed here job fairs, pathways to success, and the transitional housing units and reentry services.

The job fairs here in Pennsylvania, we have about 25 state correctional facilities, and I am not sure exactly what year it started, but every year they have been doing job fairs for the guys that are incarcerated. Every single facility has one. They bring in providers, they bring in employers, so it provides them not only with job leads but also for resources for when they re-enter into the community. So OVR is one of the people that's present there. Any other community agencies that want to attend that are usually local to that area. So that's one of the good things that's happening. Literally Pennsylvania went on stay-at-home orders for the state on March 13, and I think the following week these job fairs were about to start here in Pennsylvania. The state correctional facilities are not allowing any outside visitors, so unfortunately, as of this year, none of these have been able to happen at this point in time. I don't know if we'll get back to the point by the end of the year whether any of these are going to happen this year or not. So we'll have to see on that.

The pathways to success, the SCIs actually have a curriculum that they've developed. It's called Pathways to Success. Some of the areas that that curriculum touches on is they do O\*NET interest assessments. They look at jobs that aren't available. There's a resource in a couple slides that Randy and I are going to talk about as to where they get that information from. They teach them about understanding job opportunities. They teach them career pathways. They talk about the opportunities in the SCIs. They help them develop career plans. They introduce them to the PA Career Link,

which is the one-stop shop. They work on resumes, cover letters, and teaching them how to fill out applications. They teach them interview skills. So this is a really good program to help get them prepared for employment when they are leaving and transitioning back into the community.

A lot of these services will start happening in the transitional housing units or THUs or reentry services offices, which is the RSOs. Usually those guys that are in those programs are very close to being released, usually about 12 to 18 months out, and those are usually the guys that I would go in and work with, and we would start working on employment stuff while they are in one of those units. They have a team that's in place there. They actually have a parole agent that actually works in those units with those guys to help them with that transition and helping them get ready to go back out into the community.

Anything else that you want to bring up, Randy, on that slide?

>> RANDY LOSS: Well, I think it's important that, again, we look at -- meaning folks that are on the call in their conversation -- what can you do to go into facilities and let them know about what services are available in the community because I think it's important if there are individuals poised to be released from the facilities, they need to know what they are being released to. If there's just a bus ticket and a bunch of -- a bag of clothes that they wore when they came in to the facility waiting for them, they are not going to be successful. But if they can know that there is a VR program, there are services in the community that can be offered to help a person be supported, and also find out if they are under supervision and they have a parole officer, what can you do to connect to that parole officer so that you are on the same page systemically, philosophically, and they know what you can do for them and you know what they can do for you.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: These are some of the training programs currently being offered in the SCIs here in Pennsylvania. This is a list of some of them. Some of the other programs that they offer is CAD, computer animated drawing -- I can't remember what it stands for. Do you know, Randy?

>> RANDY LOSS: Computer-aided drawing.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Drafted drawing or drawing draft or something like that. Custodial maintenance. They offer electronics, fiber optics, horticulture, machine shop, masonry, optical assistant, restaurant trades, and these credits that they get can be transferred to colleges. And I know, Randy, you have an interesting story on the horticulture from Philadelphia?

>> RANDY LOSS: Yes, the Philadelphia Horticultural Society went into the Philadelphia county prison -- so this isn't state, this is a county prison -- and they developed a horticultural program with individuals that are incarcerated there, and they produce about 9,000

pounds of fresh vegetables a year, and they have about a 76% success rate of people getting jobs upon release. So they have those skills that they've learned, and 76% of the people that have gone through this program that get out are able to find a job quickly because of the skill sets they've learned.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So one of the other things that we've been working on is that some of these training programs they have could possibly have the potential to be apprenticeship programs. So I have been in conversations with what we call ATO, Apprenticeship Training Office here, to see what we can do about changing some of these programs and seeing if there's not a possible potential for them to become apprenticeship programs in the future.

Next slide.

>> RANDY LOSS: Sorry. I was trying to respond to a question.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So question 3, what does Ban The Box mean? Does it mean removing cardboard boxes from prison common areas? Does it mean removing the criminal background question from employment applications? Does it mean prisons prohibiting boxing within the facility? Or does it mean that employers cannot ask criminal background questions during the interview?

One of the panelists said 2 -- or one of the ...

>> RANDY LOSS: I am surprised no one answered -- someone answered 3. Awesome. (Laughter).

Wait another five seconds.

Well, the correct answer is 2, removing the criminal background question from employment applications. So Ban the Box is a national movement, but it's not something that's in every state, it's not something that's in every town. Interesting enough, in Pennsylvania, for example, it's in Philadelphia. It was something that was put into codification in the Pittsburgh region, Allegheny County, but to this date I don't know if it's actually implemented. So there are some challenges that municipalities, governments have with it in regards to implementing it because it's -- you know, I don't think it's as controversial as it used to be, but some states have gone, the whole state has gone ban the box. Many cities across the country have gone ban the box. If you look at banthebox.com, it's going to list all the areas, they keep an active list of all the areas, states, municipalities, counties that have gone to ban the box. It's a very important thing in regards to helping a person get in front of the employer. You know? Because if the employer asks that question, have you ever had a criminal record or committed a crime or whatever, depending how it's asked, removing that from the application allows a person to get that opportunity to tell their story in front of the employer. So it's something that I think is very important, and it allows the individual to have that opportunity to speak on their behalf.

Kimberly?



>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So some of the Pennsylvania laws that we have here is the Clean Slate Law, and then legal limitations document. That's not really a law. But earlier when I told you that the pathways program and the SCIs, that there was a document that they use. It's this legal limitations document to determine somebody's criminal background and their employment opportunities. We'll talk a little bit more about that in a second. Then ban the box, which is what Randy was just talking about.

So the Clean Slate Law, it's very similar to what we talked about earlier with North Carolina. In Pennsylvania, though, ours began -- we began automatically sealing records June 28 of 2019. So statistically, by June 27, which is in a couple of weeks from now, 2020, over 30 million cases will be sealed without the cost of filing petitions in the court. That's more than half of the charges in Pennsylvania's courts database. So that's the big thing with the Clean Slate Law is it's an automatic process that these records are automatically being sealed and people aren't having to do anything to seal them. Previously you had to petition the courts to request the expungement and sealing of the record, where that's not happening anymore. So somebody prior to that date is still going to have to petition the courts and have it sealed. But it's helping with that second chance, like Randy was explaining. It's helping them have that opportunity at employment that they didn't have before because now people can't see, like I said before, same thing with North Carolina. The only people that can see that is either a district attorney or the courts or the police officers. Like they are the only ones that can have access to those records once they've been expunged. So when somebody's getting a background check for their employment, the employer is not going to be able to see these records.

Here in PA, they do have to wait. Arrest records will be sealed after charges are dropped, and some conviction records will be sealed after ten years. It may take a little bit longer in the State of PA to get your record sealed than it does in North Carolina because it seems like after seven years, if it was a misdemeanor, you guys were able to get your record sealed for ten years for a felony.

So the legal limitations document, that was done by Community Legal Services, or CLS. It's a legal advocacy group. They are based in Philadelphia. They work really, really hard to advocate for reentrants. They created this document that looks at different careers, and it looks at the charges that impede you from going into that career. I wouldn't say that it's all inclusively or totally, like if you have one of those charges you are never going to get into this career, but it definitely addresses like these are the ones that are going to be -- could possibly potentially be a barrier. So it's a really good document. Even though I know it's geared for PA and our criminal system and our laws and stuff, it could still be -- for those of you in other states, it still could be a good starting point

to look and say okay, like Randy mentioned earlier, a doctor, so what could be some of the criminal charges that could impede them from becoming a doctor? Then researching your state to see if there's anything you need to add or delete from that document. But it could be a good starting point for you. The link to that document is either in the resources or the reference pages at the end of the presentation.

>> RANDY LOSS: It's in the resources page.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: It's the resources page. Okay.

So then the ban the box, I found this very interesting. So I did some research on ban the box. It actually started -- I thought this was something very new and recent, and it's not. Ban the box actually started in Hawaii in 1998. They were the first ones to ban the box. Did you know that, Randy?

>> RANDY LOSS: I did not.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Okay. I learned something new too. So it's actually, as you were talking about, it is in Pittsburgh, and it is in Philly. It is currently in 33 states and in over 150 major cities across the United States. So it's grown. It's in more and more cities. So I would suggest that you maybe do some research to find out if it is banned in your city or not. It's usually most of your major cities.

>> RANDY LOSS: I was going to jump to the next slide.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: That's fine.

>> RANDY LOSS: This is probably something that folks are very interested in in regards to the inmate disability statistics. Our national statistics are 32% within prisons and 40% within jails have a disability. And of those populations, 54% in prisons have co-occurring, 53% in jails are co-occurring. And this is an interesting statistic, and we'll talk briefly about a project that took place in Pennsylvania regarding a brain injury. The CDC indicates that anywhere between 25 and 87 percent of inmates report having experienced a head injury or traumatic brain injury. The reason they vary is, one, how is it assessed? A lot of therapists, medical doctors, are not trained to identify that type of thing amongst inmates. It's something that, again, depending how well jails and prisons are doing the assessment to determine if the person has a brain injury, that's why the wide variety of percentage across jails and prisons across Pennsylvania. And specifically, dialing into North Carolina, in 2016-17, they saw that 71% of the people screened for substance abuse needed long-term treatment, and about 25,000 people with serious mental illness annually enter the jails. So again, the jails, prisons -- jails and prisons are the largest mental health providers in the country because so many people with mental illness are going into the jails. So many people with substance abuse issues are going into the jails. So I just wanted to throw that out there for consideration in regards to there are

a lot of individuals, a high percentage, much higher than the general population, that have a disability that could benefit from VR services that are in corrections.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Randy, I just want to say on that last slide, I saw some people asking about whether somebody being in prison was what qualified them for VR services, and it's not. This is what qualifies people for VR services is this, the TBIs, the drug and alcohol issues. That's what's going to qualify somebody for VR services.

Go ahead to the next slide. So traumatic brain injury research, Pennsylvania has done a research study. We did a pilot. It was with SCI Graterford. The first time we did it, that prison facility has actually been closed. There was actually a report, it was in the 2018 Journal of Offender Rehabilitation. Anybody that wants to read the report, I will give you real quick, it was in Volume 57 of the 2018, Issue 8, pages 562-585. Are the research was actually published there. In that research, they looked at SCI Graterford. There was 163 guys that they looked at, and 75% of them that were screened reported an event or events that could have resulted in brain injury. So on an average, the report said there was 3.8 traumatic brain injury incidents per individual. So it wasn't just one traumatic brain injury that most of these guys had, it was multiple traumatic brain injuries. So when they are coming out, you are wondering why they can't get to appointments on time, where they are forgetting appointments, I mean, their whole frontal lobe and executive functioning is impeded, so they needed some assistance. So in this research, what they did was had a case manager that worked with these guys, and the neat thing about it was because that case manager was inside the prison before they left, that case manager stayed with them as they transitioned into the community, and when they went into the community, that case manager also assisted them in filling out the applications for OVR, maybe for medical assistance, whatever services that they needed, they were there for that support to be able to hold them and get them through this because somebody with a traumatic brain injury, the year-over-year process is astronomical.

So it was very hard for them to do and it was very hard to do. They were missing appointments. That was the nice thing about all of this.

We are getting ready to do another study. Again, because of COVID-19, it's been postponed. But they are ready to do this with SKI Phoenix and SCI Chester.

>> RANDY LOSS: These are state prisons, that's what SCI is basically a state prison.

Actually, can I jump in?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Go ahead.

>> RANDY LOSS: -- to talk about the HRSA grants. What happened

in the study, it was found out that 74% of the individuals in the study of 163, 74% of them indicated they had acquired a brain injury prior to age 21. So with that, the project took this data and applied for two HRSA grants, federal grants, and they got two more grants to go into county juvenile development facilities. A county in the Philadelphia region, and Montgomery County, also in the Philadelphia region, and they are finding the basically the same statistics, just under 60% of individuals had acquired brain injury. It wasn't necessarily traumatic brain injury, but upon doing a little deeper dive, they found that about 45% of that 60% had traumatic brain injury, so they had enough concussions, enough blows to the head that gave them traumatic brain injury. So again, an invisible disability that is very common in the prison system and something that, again, these are individuals that need VR services to be able to be successful.

And wanting to move on. We'll move to question 4, so Kimberly, you want to go ahead and ask the question?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So is it a good idea to have a list of businesses that hire people with criminal records to give to an individual with a criminal record? Yes or no? Somebody put in the chat no. They put 2, which is no.

>> RANDY LOSS: We'll go about another five seconds.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Somebody just put depends. No

>> RANDY LOSS: Let's go ahead and close the poll. Okay. And the answer is yes and no, and I will quickly explain why. If you know the individual's background, if you know their record, if you know their disability, if you have worked with them enough to know that they are ready for the job search, then yes. If they are not, then no. What I mean by that is I have heard many probation or parole offices that say I have this list of 10 or 12 employers that I tell the guys -- and women -- upon hitting the streets, they are now under my supervision, go and find a job. Here's ten places to go. Know nothing about this person's ability to go to the job, know nothing about job matching, if this person is really going to be a good fit for these employers. So if you have good information, you have a good match that this person that you are going to be sending to this business as the employer is going to be a good match for them, then the answer is yes. About you I don't like folks just saying hey, here's a list. Go to these ten employers. We don't want to be sending people that are not ready for the job search to these businesses. We don't want to burn bridges. So it's yes and no, but it's dependent on how you are handling how the information is going to these individuals and how ready are the individuals for the job search.

Kimberly?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So employer roundtables. This was something happening here in PA. We were actually having roundtable

discussions. It was everybody from the secretary of DOC and his staff clear down to employers from the county, labor and industry, the secretary was present, OVR is there, politicians, reentry service providers, and workforce. So all of these people were around this table. We met at an employer that was reentry friendly. And we had discussions and debunking those myths of, oh, if I hire somebody who has a criminal history, they are going to steal from me, they are going to be bad, blah, blah, blah. They actually had one of their employees that is a -- was a -- had a criminal record actually came in and talked to the employers that were there. So it was really good conversations, and these are things that just need to be had not only in PA and across the state, but in other states, just having those conversations.

Go ahead to the next slide.

>> RANDY LOSS: Okay. Thanks, Kimberly.

Just briefly, as we finish out our presentation, we'll just talk about some partners. We talked about Department of Corrections and the state correctional institutions and what's been going on inside the state correctional institutions. We did touch on probation and parole. We want to talk about the PA Board of Probation and Parole. They are primarily providing parole at the state level, but they provide a lot of training and funding for probation officers across Pennsylvania. And they have some specific parole officers called ASCRAs for short. It's Assessment, Sanctioning, and Community Resource Agent. Basically they are doing rehabilitation types of stuff with individuals as opposed to dealing with the criminogenic or criminal record aspect of things, helping individuals to be successful, helping them to -- having the lists that are appropriate because they know the person is ready for the job search. They have the Bureau of Community Corrections as we mentioned earlier. They have reentry parole acts that are part of the offenders' unit team. We talked about the RSO earlier. Again, as these individuals are in the RSOs, in the prisons, they are ready to get out, getting close to getting out, the parole agent is there to make that connection to the community, to help connect them to the community once they've returned.

And the probation, parole officers are excellent community partners. As we mentioned earlier, they have access to criminal records. They can develop sensible terms of supervision. As agents of the court, they can make changes to the terms of supervision. So it's not something that can't be changed, but also, too, you can work with them, if they are familiar with what VR is and what they do, they can help integrate your programming into what's happening with supervision so that the person isn't just getting punitive conditions of supervision but it's something that's helping them connect to success.

We will talk about the PA Commission, crime and delinquency,

and reentry coalitions. As I mentioned earlier, every state has something similar to the PCCD. In Pennsylvania, it's called a Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. It's a grant-issuing state agency. Every state has one because it's a federally funded program, and the TBI project we talked about where assessment of brain injury was done and the forensic peer project where peers were trained inside the institutions, the state prisons, that was funded by the PCDD. And they are looking for different types of projects to fund, so if you get plugged into them and them being a grant-issuing agency, there may be projects that you can develop together to be able to do something that's rehabilitative in nature and helping people to return to the community with the right kind of supports.

Now, at the local level, there are PA reentry coalitions, and in North Carolina, they are called Reentry Councils. In Pennsylvania, it's called the County Justice Advisory Boards, the CJABs. In North Carolina, they are called the Criminal Justice Advisory Board. These are local programs that are in every county. I looked across different state titles, and they were called advisory boards, they were called commissions, they were called groups. It varies upon the state. So be on the lookout, do a BOLO, as it were, for your local-level reentry coalitions or councils, those organizations that are dedicated to helping people re-enter successfully.

Now we'll take questions. So Heidi and Beth, if you want to give us some of the questions that were thrown our way. I tried to answer a few of the questions, I know Kimberly did as well, but there are probably many more questions that we weren't able to answer quickly.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Yeah, no problem. Thanks, Randy. This is Beth. Just so everyone knows, I am having some tech issues, so sorry that my video is not up, and I hope my audio comes through okay.

Just to revisit a couple of the questions that you already got to, there were a couple people who had asked about expungement. Could you just real quick share with the group how you go about getting that because you had answered those, but I had seen there were a couple, so I wanted to make sure in case others had that question as well.

>> RANDY LOSS: Expungement, unfortunately, is an expensive option. It can take some time. My advice is if I have somebody who says hey, I want to get my record expunged, before I start looking forward, I say no, stop them right there. Be polite about it, but say let's help you find a job first, gain an income, start getting your work history going, and then start working towards expungement. It's not something that they want to do. I mean, when individuals get out, they are raring to go, they get conditions of supervision, so they've got someone pushing and pushing them, carrot and stick.

There is the stick of the probation officer/parole officer. You don't want them to go down that path immediately. That's something they can do eventually, but one, it's expensive; and two, it takes time. They don't have time because the probation or parole officer is saying hey, we want you to get a job within X number of days, blah, blah, blah. So work on expungement after they've gotten a job or gotten themselves established with a career path. That's my advice. It can be done, it is expensive, and it doesn't always come out with -- you know, records live forever on the Internet, so it's something that you have to take care with. It's just like the list of offender-friendly employees. You have to take care. You have to look at each person's individual case.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Thanks, Randy.

Then the next question I have is one that also kind of came up that you had already answered, and that one was talking about a more specific situation. But the question's asking for suggestions for working with clients who have violent offender convictions.

>> RANDY LOSS: Kimberly, you want to try that or you want me to jump in?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Say that again?

>> RANDY LOSS: Somebody with violent criminal record, how do you help somebody with a violent criminal record?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: I think it would be a matter of looking at, you know, what is that violent crime? Unfortunately, that is one of the harder ones to place. So is sex offenders. Those are probably the two most difficult criminal histories to work with. You just need to make those relationships with the employers in your area to find out who -- you are definitely not going to want to put them in certain jobs.

Randy, do you have --

>> RANDY LOSS: Well, I was going to say warehouses are good businesses as a starting point to help them develop a work history. You know, they are away from people, they are away from a variety of different temptations and whatnot, so warehouse jobs are probably a good starting point for persons with those records.

Unfortunately, it doesn't matter what kind of training they may have had, what kind of formalized training they had, because of the nature of their crime, it can be very difficult for them to find employment. And, indeed, someone asked a question is self-employment an option for some folks? And I would say self-employment is something that I would strongly consider as well because it takes a person with a criminal record probably about 8 to 10 years to really get to a life-sustaining wage simply because of their record. So I would recommend, if the person has the capability to develop a self-employment plan and it's something that seems viable, that might be a good option too because even if you have a felony, you can have your own business. You know? You are

the boss. So that's possibly a consideration as well. Again, you know, I wouldn't say everybody go that route, but self-employment for a person with a high skill set might be an option for them if they show the -- have the business sense, it could be an option for them.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Randy, do you want to advance that last slight so our contact information is up there?

>> RANDY LOSS: Sure. We'll still take questions, but we wanted to put this information up in case you wanted to reach out to us at a later date. I believe it was shown in the Chat box too at the beginning. But Beth, what other questions are there out there?

>> BETH GAERTNER: So the next one comes from George. He is asking earlier you mentioned working with a probation officer to get a full picture of the offender situation. How do you handle issues of confidentiality in that situation?

>> RANDY LOSS: Well (chuckling) usually probation and parole officers don't have to worry about the same level of confidentiality as maybe you or I would have to, but again, you want to make sure that you are getting full permission from the individual you are working with and say in order for me to get this information, I really need to talk to your probation or parole officer. You really need to get permission, I would say, from the VR side of things, you need to get permission from the individual. So I wouldn't proceed until you've gotten that in writing. Just like release of information for any other situation, you are going to want to do the same thing.

Kimberly, any thoughts?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Yeah, I mean, I would say the same thing is just those releases of information. I think as long as you are up front with the customer as to what you need and why you need it and you have the release signed. I mean, it's kind of not confidential at that point in time because they've given you permission to get it.

>> RANDY LOSS: What other questions do we have?

>> BETH GAERTNER: The next one comes from Kathleen. It says when you say expungement is not visible to public, what about when background checks are done on the state level?

>> RANDY LOSS: Well, I am not sure. Kimberly, you mentioned about the fair hiring law if from North Carolina. I think that's what she is referring to. And I would say that when records are expunged, as I mentioned a few moments ago, the information, unfortunately, lives forever on the Internet. So again, it takes making sure that the individual is aware that this stuff might happen, that you know, as an employer does a background check. Even if they are looking for an arrest record, if it shows up that a person has an arrest record, that might be something that gets the person tossed from being considered. It may have never turned into a conviction, but it's something that shows up in the system in the background



check. So I think you have to take care in regards to what exactly is the person asking to be done. Expungement, of course, is to remove the record. But even juvenile justice records are "expunged" when a person leaves the system. If they don't get an adult charge and they leave the juvenile justice system, that record is expunged. But with the advent of technology, you know, and background checks, that stuff, unfortunately, lives on forever. So it's not a perfect system, and you have to help your individual that you are working with be aware that there might be ghosts that exist on the system that pop up.

So I think, one, you have to help the individual. You, yourself, need to know what the individual's record is. That's why talking to a probation officer or parole officer is very helpful. Two, they need to be educated in what their record is so they can say now this has been expunged, just no longer exists. This information you have shouldn't exist because it's been expunged. I have shown my good behavior, I have done these things, I have a family, I've gone back to school, blah, blah, blah. So it's as much what the individual is doing and how they are putting themselves out there, how they are promoting themselves to advocate for what they've done and why that information is -- again, there are other barriers that do exist. The reason I am talking so much about it is because expungement sounds like a great idea, it is a good idea, but it's expensive and it doesn't necessarily mean it's going to remove everything that's out on the Internet.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Thanks, Randy.

The next question comes from Richard, and it's asking for states where VR is operating under an order of selection, how has that impacted serving reentering citizens with disabilities?

>> RANDY LOSS: I will throw that one to you, Kimberly.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Say it again. I am sorry. I am trying to multitask.

>> RANDY LOSS: Order of selection, how does the order of selection affect providing services to people with criminal records?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So Pennsylvania is one of the few states that we are on a closed order of selection. So basically, they have to apply for services. They will sit on the wait list. Their eligibility can be determined, but they will be sitting on a wait list until we open up and they can come through. And that's based on the date of their application.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Thanks, Kimberly. The next one -- give me one second -- the next one comes from Charles. It says the population I served in Florida, I learned there are a very limited amount of resources available for SOs. Even the services intended for reintegration could not serve these individuals. If I may, is Florida the only state that sees this lack of services for this population?

>> RANDY LOSS: Not knowing how all 50 states and the territories as well are operating, I would say probably not.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: Yeah, I don't think so either.

>> RANDY LOSS: I think that you are going to find those pockets of lack of resources, shall we say, across the country. And just because Pennsylvania, we are talking about what we've been doing in Pennsylvania, believe me, that doesn't mean that we have a plethora of resources. We don't. We've just looked at what can we do just to move the needle a little bit in regards to making those connections. Like for example, even if you can get something with the Department of Corrections to get record at no cost, you know, copied and sent at no cost, those are the little kinds of things that can help make change. It's not a lot, but it's something. And that's kind of where we started, you know, and again, I started working with Department of Corrections probably in 2009, 2010, and it took many years. It wasn't until I left the position, Kimberly actually replaced me in the state VR agency, and it took a full seven years for the juvenile justice MOU to go into place, and a lot of what we started back in the early 2010s didn't come to fruition until now. It's like making wine is the best way to describe it. You know what you want to do. You know what the intention is. But don't be surprised if it's going to take some time to get to the point where it's actually making something happen.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Yeah, and to follow up on Charles' question, we have folks on this webinar from all around the country, so if other people want to chime in in the Chat about what resources are available in your state for reentering sex offenders, if you have resources you can share, if you are one of the states experiencing a gap, feel free to chime in on the Chat and kind of let us know where you are at because we want to share resources across different lines if we can. I know that's not always possible, but feel free to chime in on the Chat.

>> RANDY LOSS: And I do apologize I didn't realize what the acronym SO meant, sexual offender, yes, that is a very challenging population to work with. I am not going to lie to you. I think that, again, warehouse positions, possibly self-employment, you know, someplace where the person's going to be away from the public, that's likely the most ideal position that's going to bear some fruit for this person. It's the nature of the crime they committed, unfortunately.

>> BETH GAERTNER: The next question is coming from Matthew. When a returning citizen is applying for a position with vulnerable populations, if the box regarding criminal background is removed, how does an employer protect the client who is a member of a vulnerable population?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: So my view on the -- it's ban the box. So it's only to ban the box on the application. So at the time that

the conditional offer is done, that's when the person needs to be disclosing their criminal history. It does not eliminate them disclosing that information. And maybe that's not the most appropriate job for that person. If they have that kind of a history and there is a vulnerable person there, you know, maybe the employer needs to -- because again, it's a conditional job offer. And once that's known, maybe they put him somewhere else in the company that he wouldn't be exposed to that person. Maybe there's something that they can do to look at where they don't cross paths, working on separate shifts, something like that. It doesn't mean that they can't offer him the job, but those are things that the customer -- the individual just needs to disclose at the point of a conditional job offer. That's when those things need to be discussed because that's what the purpose of ban the box was is to get that interview so that they could actually get the conditional job offer.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Thanks, Kimberly. The next question is from Stephanie. It's asking what is the best way to ask an employer if they're CORI/SORI friendly?

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: You are talking about reentry friendly?

>> BETH GAERTNER: I am sorry, I am not super familiar with those acronyms.

>> KIMBERLY GERLACH: I am assuming it's reentry or ... so to me, just ask the question. You know? And I've done it. You know? Are you opposed to hiring somebody that has a criminal record? And I mean, I have asked employers. And usually I don't get turned down. Or a lot of times it's, well, we can hire anything, but we may not be able to hire somebody that has an assault charge. Or you know, depending on -- I mean, retail, they can't hire somebody that's got retail theft. So it doesn't preclude everything, but it may preclude certain offenses. So I think it's just you ask the question.

>> RANDY LOSS: I think, too, you could ask the question of a business saying I have the perfect person for you, but they have -- you know, if I had a perfect person for you but they had a criminal record, would you be willing to hire them? So I think depending upon what the need is, I think before the pandemic, you know, businesses were clamoring for people. After the pandemic, I don't know what's going to be happening, so it should be interesting to see, but hopefully a year from now, back to the situation where people are clamoring for employees, so it might be an easier ask to make at that time. But we'll have to see.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Thanks to both you, Randy, and Kimberly as well. We had a lot of questions, so thanks to everybody who participated and submitted their questions. We obviously didn't get to all of them, so we'll be sending them along to both of you so that you can answer them, and we'll post them along with the webinar. So if we didn't get to your question, I apologize, but it will be answered and posted in the archived webinar session.

Also in these last couple minutes of the webinar here while we are still live, feel free to plug in questions in the Q&A if they popped up for you.

I just want to do a couple quick housekeeping things. If you are in need of CRC for today's webcast, Heidi's been adding links to the Chat box on the steps to request this the CRC. It can also be found on the webcast page of our website at [projecte3.com](http://projecte3.com). Additionally, if you are registered for this webcast, you will receive an email tomorrow with the directions. If you have any questions, please direct those to [ProjectE3tc.com](http://ProjectE3tc.com). Final reminder for today, the next webinar in the Project E3 webcast series is on June 13, the final webinar in the trauma-informed care series, and that is creating a trauma-informed environment. We hope to see you at future webinars, and thanks again to Randy and Kimberly. This was a really great webinar, and we hope you are able to join us either for this session or both this one and the one in the morning, but any questions, feel free to reach out. So thanks, everyone.

(End of session, 3:31 p.m. CT.)