



R.I.S.E. Ex-Offender Expo Combines Job Opportunities with Professional Guidance

By Alex Vuocolo | July 30, 2013

The [Mayor's Office of Re-Integration Services for Ex-Offenders](#) (R.I.S.E.) held an event today that doubled as a job fair and workshop for ex-offenders seeking employment. Social service organizations lined up in the same room as over 100 employers to combine job opportunities with much-needed guidance.

The event, called the Ex-Offender Expo, came just two months after city officials had to [shut down a job fair for ex-offenders](#) because more than triple the expected number of people arrived. Staffers at the event had attendees leave their resumes so they could be contacted about a follow-up event at a bigger location.

Bill Hart, executive director of R.I.S.E., said that the overflow of people was due to the introduction of social media into the fair's outreach. With this event, he said, a number of measures were taken to better prepare for more people and expand the role of the event in combatting recidivism – the return of ex-offenders to prison – through employment.

To start, the Expo required pre-registration to attend, which R.I.S.E. encouraged through robocalls, email blasts and the creation of a smartphone application for registration.



R.I.S.E. also reached out to 300 individuals who did not bring their resumes to the last job fair and offered them a workshop in resume development and lessons on employer expectations. 120 individuals attended and left with polished resumes to bring to the Expo.

There were a number workshops at the Expo that addressed common barriers to employment for ex-offenders. 50 human relations experts, for example, were present to conduct mock interviews. Hart stressed that an important aspect of these interviews was teaching ex-offenders how to address their conviction in a job interview and articulate how they turned it into a positive experience.

Additionally, organizations addressing literacy were present to help with GED attainment, and an “expungement clinic” was set up to actually file petitions for expungement to clear ex-offender’s records before applying for jobs.

With six out of every 10 inmates returning to jail within three years, according to [a report by the PA Department of Corrections](#), Hart believes that extra services like those provided at the Expo are crucial to getting ex-offenders employed and thus reducing recidivism.

“Employment is probably the greatest recidivism-reducing tool there is,” Hart said. But often there are too many factors that must be addressed first before employment is possible, he added.

View this article at <http://www.generocity.org/2013/rise-ex-offender-expo-combines-job-opportunities-with-professional-guidance/>