

Reentry and Barriers to Employment

Lessons From Casey's Investments

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



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The Challenge

Through its work in communities in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Annie E. Casey Foundation discovered the inability of parents and other residents to successfully reenter society after leaving prison — particularly in terms of obtaining and keeping family-supporting jobs — was having a deeply negative impact on children.

Two main pathways led Casey to this issue. One was the Foundation's efforts to improve employment opportunities in low-income communities through two initiatives: the Jobs Initiative and Making Connections.¹ Among the communities involved in the Jobs Initiative, an estimated 20–30 percent of participants had a criminal record.² In major urban areas across the United States, one in every three adults has a criminal record.³

The second pathway was a series of Casey fatherhood initiatives that sought to call attention to the crucial role fathers play in their children's lives, particularly as providers of family income. The Foundation realized many fathers were absent because they were behind bars — or because they were encountering significant barriers to work upon their release and return to their neighborhoods. This, in turn, affected family income, as fathers could not earn money to support their children, whether directly or through child support payments.

In both of these areas of Casey's work, barriers to employment for formerly incarcerated people — most of whom were men — emerged as a serious roadblock to their success, as well as that of the Jobs Initiative and Making Connections. Through the latter initiative, Casey articulated several principles that drove the Foundation's decision to invest in reentry: namely, that incarceration, reentry and reintegration into society (1) were family matters; (2) were community-based challenges; and (3) compromised the ability of Making Connections communities to achieve their desired results.

Indeed, the consequences of incarceration, as well as the inability to successfully reenter society and secure employment, reverberate into the next generation. More than half of incarcerated parents are the primary financial support for their children.⁴ The sudden loss of that support leaves their families in dire financial straits that continue even after they return, as they struggle to secure employment. In addition, their children contend with the emotional toll and stigma of having a parent behind bars. Kids of incarcerated parents exhibit more aggressive behavior than their peers, and the trauma of being separated from a parent can result in depression and anxiety, in addition to impeding academic achievement.⁵ Children with incarcerated mothers are at greater risk of dropping out of school.⁶

This is of particular concern for communities of color, as African-American children are over seven times more likely to have parent incarcerated than their white peers, and Latino kids are more than twice as likely to have a parent serve time.⁷ The Foundation recently explored the significant impact of incarceration on children, their families and neighborhoods — and offered

several recommendations on ways to better support kids and families while parents serve time and upon release — in *A Shared Sentence: The Devastating Toll of Parental Incarceration on Kids, Families and Communities*.

From 1995 to 2015, the Casey Foundation made a set of strategic investments to improve opportunities for people returning from jail or prison. These investments focused in three primary areas: (1) analyzing and improving data about incarcerated individuals; (2) investigating state laws and regulations that barred people with criminal records from employment in certain industries or occupations; and (3) exploring the development of an employment pipeline from prison to work.

Much of this work took place in the early 2000s, a time when labor shortages made employers more willing to consider hiring formerly incarcerated individuals to meet their needs.⁸ Nationally, the number of people behind bars increased by more than 330 percent between 1980 and 2002.⁹ Corrections expenditures had risen from \$9 billion in 1982 to \$60 billion in 2002, and these costs were having a notable impact on public-sector budgets.¹⁰ Recognizing the toll of the growing prison population driven by ever-tightening sentencing laws, especially for drug offenses, the U.S. Department of Justice began providing states with funds to improve their reentry systems.¹¹

This paper summarizes some of the key lessons the Foundation learned from its reentry and employment efforts, with insights from dozens of reports and resources on incarceration and reentry, as well as interviews with key Casey staff members who worked directly on these investments. We hope it will help inform practitioners, funders and policymakers pursuing strategies that connect formerly incarcerated individuals with employment.

Lessons From Casey's Reentry Work

Research has shown employment is one of the most influential predictors of whether an individual who has served time will remain out of prison.¹² Employment as an outcome is not just about earning money to pay for expenses; it is an indicator and a demonstration of attachment to society.¹³

The lessons the Foundation learned from investing in reentry fall into two main categories: (1) barriers to employment experienced by formerly incarcerated individuals and (2) what works in addressing those barriers. We also share a third set of final lessons from these investments.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Because people of color are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, they in particular struggle with securing employment upon their release from prison.

In the early 2000s, African Americans represented 46 percent of inmates in state and federal prison, and Latinos made up 16 percent, while both groups respectively accounted for less than 14 percent of the total U.S. population.¹⁴ By itself, this suggests reentry is a particularly urgent issue for communities of color. In addition, one study found that African-American men in New York City with prison records received fewer job offers for entry-level positions than white men with identical records. The study also estimated that racial disparities in incarceration have increased wage inequality between African Americans and their white counterparts by 10 percent.¹⁵

African-American men who have never been in prison or jail may face many of the same employment barriers to work as individuals who have been incarcerated. Surveys have found employers are quick to presume that African-American applicants are likely criminals.¹⁶ Other research has shown employers are disinclined to hire black men in general.¹⁷ In fact, there is some evidence that white individuals with a felony conviction may find it easier to get a job than African Americans with no record at all.¹⁸

Formerly incarcerated individuals primarily live in low-income communities and face many of the same barriers to employment that low-income individuals do.

Compared to the general population, people in prison tend to have less education, poorer literacy and numeracy skills and weaker employment histories.¹⁹ Large numbers of them contend with mental health issues, often undiagnosed or undertreated.²⁰ Many have physical health problems and have struggled to cover basic needs, including food.²¹ Most leave prison with little or no improvement in those areas and now face a ticking clock: If they do not land employment within a certain time, they may risk being sent back to prison.²²

Formerly incarcerated individuals also experience the same geographic barriers to employment that others in low-income communities do. Casey's discovery of the challenges associated with reentry through its community-based employment programs sparked its investments in this area. When people leave prison, they return to the low-income communities they came from — or end up in low-income neighborhoods where housing is more affordable. These areas typically contend with crime and lack access to employment opportunities, as well as the social and health services formerly incarcerated individuals need to become stable.²³ These challenges make falling prey to the same patterns and habits that led them to prison more likely.²⁴

A disconnected patchwork of state laws and regulations — as well as employers’ hiring practices — bars formerly incarcerated individuals from working in many industries and occupations.

One Casey-supported analysis in Florida, for example, found that up to 40 percent of all jobs may be off-limits by law, to at least some degree, to people who have served time. In any state, the exact number of jobs that are out of reach is difficult to determine because they may be listed in laws, rules and formal and informal policies.²⁵ Licensing boards in specific industries may create additional barriers through their own rules, agency and board policies, application forms and instructions. The ban may be for life or time-limited and may not offer a process for restoring the right to work in that profession. Many of these new rules and regulations date back to a time when far fewer convictions were felonies, and most have built up over time without review against existing law. Once on the books, they are seldom, if ever, reconsidered or removed.²⁶

Transitional Jobs Through Social Enterprise: North Lawndale Employment Network and Sweet Beginnings

Founded in the late 1990s, [North Lawndale Employment Network](#) (NLEN) is a community-based organization that works in a Chicago neighborhood where up to 57 percent of the population is involved in the criminal justice system. NLEN provides job training and transitional employment, while also connecting formerly incarcerated individuals with employers looking for reliable workers. NLEN also supports reentry into the community by helping these individuals and their families connect with needed services such as food assistance.

[Sweet Beginnings](#) is a social enterprise run by NLEN that combines job training with financial counseling and income supports as well as hands-on employment and management experience. Sweet Beginnings is an all-natural line of body care products made from and infused with honey extracted from the urban apiary that NLEN manages in the North Lawndale community.

Since 2001, Casey has made a series of grants to NLEN to support its Ex-offender Employment Service Network and teamed up with NLEN to open Chicago’s first Center for Working Families in 2003. In the 2015 fiscal year, NLEN served 1,978 people, of whom 620 gained employment, and 12 were hired by Sweet Beginnings. In the 10 years since its founding, Sweet Beginnings has hired 400 people who had a combined recidivism rate of less than 8 percent.

Even when people who have served time are not legally barred from certain professions, hiring practices may raise other obstacles to employment. Many employers refuse to consider an applicant who acknowledges he or she has been arrested or has a criminal record, even though that is illegal in some states.²⁷ In a survey of 3,000 employers in four major metro areas, two-thirds said they would not knowingly hire someone who had been incarcerated.²⁸ In some industries, employers may incorrectly believe they are legally barred from hiring formerly

incarcerated individuals.²⁹ Because of the disparate impact of arrest, conviction and prison sentencing on communities of color, discriminating against formerly incarcerated individuals in hiring is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (see www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/titlevii.cfm for the full text of Title VII).

Moreover, people often leave prison without key documents required to obtain work and housing. Some states automatically suspend or revoke driver's licenses at conviction, even for offenses unrelated to driving, and it is not uncommon for people who have served time to need to obtain new Social Security cards upon release.³⁰ Simply regaining a driver's license can be a step toward employment.

Child support payments and other debts can become a barrier to employment.

Most adults in state or federal prison are parents.³¹ Many enter prison under obligation to pay child support, very often with unpaid arrears.³² They also may enter prison with other debts, such as unpaid court fees, victim restitution and other legal fees.³³ In 14 states, including Delaware, Montana, Nebraska and Virginia,³⁴ unpaid child support continues to accrue during a prison sentence, though some states have modified their laws to suspend payments during that time.³⁵ Once a formerly incarcerated individual with a child support obligation lands a job, the amount removed from the paycheck to make those payments may be so large that it deters him or her from seeking legal employment. Reducing payments for child support, crime-victim restitution or other debts to a more reasonable amount can ultimately support employment. For example, the Massachusetts Department of Corrections has a full-time staff person at its main intake facility for men who is responsible for identifying individuals with child support payments and working with them to request modifications in their support orders while they are in prison.³⁶

Parole and probation requirements intended to reduce recidivism can thwart employment.

People who have served time may have to check in with a parole or probation officer regularly. Other requirements may include drug testing, drug treatment, mental health treatment, parenting classes, support groups or other services.³⁷ Many individuals who have been incarcerated are also under curfew orders. While such services may be intended to help support success or prevent reoffending after prison, they can become barriers to employment, depending on how they are structured.³⁸ For example, if services are only available during business hours, that could limit an individual's ability to take certain jobs.³⁹ The location of services can further exacerbate the situation, especially if people depend on public transportation — which is common.⁴⁰

Ban the Box: Spotlight on Georgia

In 2015, Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal signed an executive order that banned the state from requiring job seekers to disclose their criminal history on a job application. “Ban the box” policies allow people who have been incarcerated to compete on a more even playing field by postponing the review of an applicant’s criminal history until after an employer considers him or her to be qualified for a particular job. Some jurisdictions have seen an increase in hiring individuals with records after adopting such policies.⁴¹ The Georgia law, which only applies to state government hiring, was designed to help the 1,300 people released from prison each month statewide to find and keep employment. The city of Atlanta enacted a similar policy in 2013. The ban-the-box movement is national, with initiatives at the state and local level. For more information, visit <http://bantheboxcampaign.org>.

This policy is one of several recommendations to emerge from the state’s Special Council on Criminal Justice Reform for Georgians, which was established in 2011 and received technical assistance and support from the Casey Foundation and the Pew Center on the States. Other policies resulting from council recommendations include an increase in recidivism reporting and making it possible for some individuals convicted of drug offenses to have their driver’s licenses reinstated.

Casey also supported Georgia Justice Project’s efforts to expand public awareness of issues affecting the 3.7 million Georgians who have been involved in the criminal justice system and how existing policies prevent them from becoming self-sufficient after arrest or conviction. In addition, Casey supported technical assistance at other nonprofits serving people with criminal records.

Employment and education programs in prison and in the community are disconnected and inadequate to meet demand.

As stated earlier, people who serve time tend to be less educated and have weaker employment histories than the general population. Prisons offer basic education, vocational training, prison industries (e.g., laundry, furniture manufacturing) and work release as opportunities to improve employment prospects upon release, but the quality of these programs varies widely from state to state and prison to prison.⁴² In addition, the number of programs and spaces available in them consistently fall short of what is necessary to prepare everyone behind bars for successful employment after prison.⁴³ Even when funded by government, these services are often provided by nonprofits operating on shoestring budgets. Some of the largest programs known to provide high-quality, effective services for formerly incarcerated individuals — such as the [National HIRE Network](#) in New York City, [Pioneer Human Services](#) in Seattle and the [Safer Foundation](#) in Chicago — do not have adequate resources to serve everyone in need. While there are potentially thousands of smaller community-based programs across the country intended to help

people transitioning from prison or jail back into the community, most of them are small, underfunded and operating on unproven models.⁴⁴

Formerly incarcerated individuals must navigate a complex set of systems to get the services they need.

Prisons, courts, probation and parole, social services, workforce development and community-based nonprofits: Each constitutes its own unique system, usually disconnected from one another. To succeed in finding a job, staying employed and meeting basic needs, people who have served time must learn about and navigate all of these systems successfully. They are often overwhelmed by the host of responsibilities they have and the many rules and regulations with which they must comply.⁴⁵ The disconnected, multifaceted nature of the different organizations serving formerly incarcerated individuals also means any attempt to improve the system and build pathways to employment requires coordination among many different organizations.⁴⁶

Young people who have served time in jail or prison may struggle with securing employment more than older adults.

Young people who have been incarcerated face some of the same obstacles as adults, but they tend to struggle even more to secure and maintain employment upon release, suggesting they need specialized services and attention. Indeed, research indicates post-prison programs are most effective for people ages 25 years and older.⁴⁷ At the same time, young people leaving prison or jail are competing with a number of other job seekers, many of whom have some employment experience.⁴⁸ A history of involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice system — and, in some cases, interruptions to formal education — compounds that lack of experience, putting youth and young adults who have served time at a competitive disadvantage.

What Works in Addressing Barriers to Employment

The pathway to work should begin the day an individual enters prison and continue upon release and even after securing employment.

Prison training and education programs can work. Although findings are limited and vary by program models, some research has shown that participants in such programs are more successful upon release than their counterparts; employed more often and for longer periods of time; and less likely to become repeat offenders.⁴⁹ Exactly what works for whom and how much is required for positive, long-term outcomes, however, require further investigation.

Early and comprehensive release planning. From the moment people begin serving their sentences, correctional facilities should work with incarcerated individuals to develop a plan to take advantage of whatever education, training, treatment or other services they need.⁵⁰ This plan also

should include what they will do upon release and how they will continue getting the support and services necessary to find and keep a job.⁵¹ Even when an individual has the chance to engage in job training, education or work-release employment while in prison, if those opportunities are not matched with job-placement assistance after release, employment may remain elusive.⁵²

Assessments for employment skills and interests. High-quality release planning assesses and documents existing employment and educational skills, including skills and knowledge acquired behind bars.⁵³ It also identifies deficits and develops connections with training and placement opportunities in the community.⁵⁴ Successful models of effective release planning include work by the Oregon Department of Corrections, the Massachusetts Department of Correction/Mass Health project and the Tennessee Department of Correction's Good Samaritan Network.⁵⁵ While a larger **reentry** plan should focus on long-term employment needs, the **release** plan should focus on immediate needs and transitional employment.⁵⁶ Both are necessary for lasting success.

Many people in prison or jail have unrealistic self-assessments of their employment skills.⁵⁷ Before placing someone in any training or education program, correctional facilities should determine whether that individual is at an appropriate skill level to succeed. A large number of people serving time have limited education and need training for literacy and other basic skills.⁵⁸

Long-term, comprehensive employment assistance upon release. Programs that seek to help formerly incarcerated individuals find and keep jobs include many of the following elements:

- Vocational assessment
- Job-readiness training
- Transitional employment
- On-the-job training
- Job-search assistance
- Job-placement assistance
- Wage subsidies to employers to support people as they work toward becoming fully skilled employees
- Coaching or mentoring

Strengthening Families by Serving Incarcerated Women: Volunteers of America's Look Up and Hope

Two key lessons learned from Casey-supported research in the late 1990s and early 2000s: (1) The number of women behind bars was rising dramatically and (2) the impact of maternal imprisonment on children is profound. Informed by this research, Casey partnered with Volunteers of America in 2009 to pilot a program designed to strengthen families with a mother in prison. Volunteers of America has served incarcerated individuals and their families since 1896.

The pilot program, called Look Up and Hope, started in five sites (Volunteers of America affiliates in New England, Illinois, Indiana, Texas and the Dakotas). The latter three are still active. Look Up and Hope focuses on mothers who are in prison, as well as their kids and their children's caregivers (typically grandmothers). The program provides vocational training and employment services, along with educational programming and mental health and substance abuse treatment for mothers while they are in prison, as well as family counseling, mentoring and life-skills and parenting classes for children and caregivers. Each site manages its own program and mix of services, often driven by funding sources.

A series of Foundation grants between 2009 and 2012 supported Look Up and Hope's efforts to serve families, in addition to data collection and evaluation.

By 2015, Look Up and Hope had served 159 incarcerated mothers, nearly 60 percent of whom were women of color. Of those who experienced a change in employment status during 2013, about 40 percent were unemployed at the start of the year and secured a job, while roughly 20 percent changed jobs but remained employed.⁵⁹

Employment services should be paired with a set of complementary support services, based on individual needs.

Services might include any or all of the following:

- Training for basic skills (literacy and numeracy)
- Educational programming geared toward earning a GED or high school diploma
- Assistance acquiring necessary official documents, such as a Social Security card or driver's license
- Treatment for substance abuse and mental health
- Legal services
- Medical care
- Credit counseling and repair

- Transportation assistance
- Parenting classes
- Family counseling
- Personal development
- Confidence-building training
- Housing, food and clothing assistance
- Case management to support employment

Integrating all of this support into one place — through a single service provider or organization — can reduce the burden of accessing services.⁶⁰

The ability to reconnect with family is inextricably intertwined with employment success.

One of the top predictors of success for a person leaving prison is the ability to reunite with family.⁶¹ Longer sentences in prisons far from home prevent partners, children and other relatives from visiting frequently, thus breaking family bonds. Rejoining family life is often extremely difficult and may require professional support. Moreover, in some cases, the individual released has burned bridges and may not be welcome at home.⁶²

Organizations serving formerly incarcerated individuals should coordinate with others serving low-income families. The latter likely count people who have been incarcerated among the families they serve, even though they may not know it.⁶³ Identifying the individuals and families contending with the consequences of incarceration could lead to better coordination of services for the whole family.

Work release is an effective in-between point that can ease the transition from prison to employment.

Work-release programs allow people who have earned trust to leave the prison site for periods of time to work, getting real-world experience and earning money. They are generally taken to the worksite via transportation the correctional facility or employer provide.⁶⁴ Pay is usually lower than the wages paid to employees hired on the open market, which saves employers money. Some will hire former work-release employees after their prison term ends. With the decline of probation in recent years, work release has also declined, reducing opportunities to gain valuable work experience and earn money, both of which are associated with reentry success.⁶⁵

Mentoring can be a key component in helping to maintain employment.

Research has shown that mentoring for formerly incarcerated individuals is associated with better job retention and a smaller likelihood of recidivating.⁶⁶ The length of time an individual stays in the program is associated with better employment outcomes.⁶⁷ What is not known is whether the mentoring itself is what helps, or whether it simply keeps people participating in services long enough to have a meaningful impact.⁶⁸

The job search should begin in prison.

Only one in five incarcerated individuals has a job lined up at the time of release.⁶⁹ While this number may be low, it shows that it is in fact possible to line up a job while in prison, and correctional facilities, agencies and nonprofits focused on employment and training should facilitate this. Prisons can do this by providing training and work experiences in partnership with local employers.⁷⁰ Job searches can also be done online, although prisoners are often barred from internet access due to security concerns.

Transitional employment should extend for several months.

Transitional employment can be an effective tool to bring people who have been incarcerated into the working world and help them build an employment history in a supportive environment. Transitional jobs are time-limited and pay wages while also offering support services, allowing workers to learn skills, earn an income and overcome barriers to employment. Social service agencies often provide these jobs (see “Transitional Jobs Through Social Enterprise” box for more). Preliminary research has shown participation in transitional jobs with intensive employment services such as job coaching and classes on life skills in the first three months after release reduces risk of parole revocation, felony conviction and recidivism.⁷¹ Transitional employment programs often offer enough flexibility to allow someone who has been incarcerated to meet other requirements and needs such as finding housing, reconnecting with family and engaging in drug testing and treatment. But these jobs tend to last only six to eight weeks — not nearly long enough for a person to become stable. To be effective, transitional employment should last at least six months.⁷²

Expungement of records and restoration of civil rights can help improve employment prospects.

The legal and civil rights of people who have served time vary by state, and these factors can affect the jobs from which a person may be legally barred.⁷³ Some states offer procedures for expunging some offenses, sealing records or obtaining certificates of rehabilitation.⁷⁴ These can be important steps toward becoming eligible to work in an occupation or industry from which an individual has been barred by law or regulation.⁷⁵

Providing incentives for employers to hire formerly incarcerated people works.

Two such incentives are the federal bonding program for job applicants facing significant barriers and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.⁷⁶ The federal bonding program protects employers against theft or other wrongdoing by an employee at a lower cost than would be available on the open market.⁷⁷ Tax credits reduce the tax burden for employers that hire individuals who have been incarcerated. Both programs have proven effective, and many recommend expanding and replicating them at the state and local level, in addition to advertising them more widely so more employers take advantage of them.⁷⁸

Moreover, certain industries and employers may be more willing to hire people who have been incarcerated. One study looking at where formerly incarcerated individuals worked discovered that social services, restaurants and construction were the most accessible industries.⁷⁹ Employers may be more willing to hire people with barriers to employment if a third party such as a community- or faith-based organization provides support to the employee.⁸⁰

Research to Improve Reentry Prospects

The Employment Project, an initiative of the Council of State Governments Justice Center, seeks to strengthen families by addressing the unique employment and reentry challenges facing people who have been incarcerated. The project builds on previous efforts and research to better design and implement effective employment programs serving adults with criminal histories. Goals include promoting public-private dialogue that increases employment opportunities for individuals with criminal records and providing education and training to the reentry, corrections and workforce development fields.

Building on a public-private convening on reentry at the White House in 2014, the Employment Project works in three local jurisdictions to promote dialogue with policymakers and business leaders about new approaches to removing barriers to work for people with criminal records. The project will help pilot sites develop and implement a data-driven strategic plan to better meet the employment needs of higher-risk, less-job-ready individuals and will develop educational materials drawing from the pilot sites to educate the broader field.

Casey has made grants to the Council of State Governments Justice Center since 2006 to support a range of activities, including the development of a federal reentry action plan, the [National Reentry Resource Center](#), the Employment Project and other online materials.

Final Thoughts

Successful reentry is not consistently defined.

The systems that serve formerly incarcerated individuals define success differently.⁸¹ Some define it as landing any job, others would argue for a good job that pays family-supporting wages and still others would say success is staying on the job for a significant period of time. Yet some see employment as only one element of success. Within the criminal justice system, not recidivating is the usual definition of success. Without a shared definition, it is difficult to know whether programs and services work.

Data on incarcerated individuals are limited.

Government and nonprofit agencies serving the prison population need better data on the people serving time, their work backgrounds, their needs and where they go after they leave prison.⁸² We also need better data on how people fare once they return to their communities. For example, corrections departments do not track job retention for former inmates.⁸³ They may know state job-placement rates, if they know anything at all. We need more data to determine what works for employment and reentry.

Strengthening employment conditions in the low-wage economy will help formerly incarcerated individuals, particularly of color, and their families.

Prison and poverty are inextricably linked in communities of color. Sixty percent of African-American men who dropped out of high school will serve time in prison by the time they are in their mid-30s.⁸⁴ In addition, people who have been incarcerated primarily live in low-income communities where they compete against neighbors for a shrinking pool of low-skill jobs.⁸⁵ Addressing the general lack of opportunity in high-poverty communities could also benefit individuals returning from prison and struggling to enter the job market.

We have limited evidence of what works.

The lessons presented in this paper are neither absolute nor complete. Evaluations of existing programs serving individuals who have been incarcerated are of varying rigor, and few randomized controlled trials exist. While Casey learned a great deal from its work on reentry, more research and evaluations of programs are necessary to identify other potential models and determine definitively what works to help formerly incarcerated individuals land and keep jobs.

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Interviews

The following individuals who worked on the Casey Foundation's reentry initiatives were interviewed for this report: Bob Giloth, vice president of the Foundation's Center for Community and Economic Opportunity; John Padilla, former associate director of workforce development; and Ira Barbell, a retired senior associate.

Endnotes

¹ Launched in 1995, the Jobs Initiative was an eight-year effort in six cities to connect inner-city adults with family-supporting jobs and to improve the way urban labor markets worked for low-income, low-skilled workers. The initiative's lessons continue to inform Casey's work to improve financial stability for families.

Making Connections, the Foundation's major community change initiative in the 2000s, focused on family strengthening. The 10-year, multisite initiative was based on the Foundation's core belief that kids do well when their families do well, and families do better when they live in supportive communities — a belief that continues to guide Casey's two-generation approach.

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