



## **Building Career Facilitation Skills**

### **Module 5: Overcoming Barriers to Successful Reentry**

#### **Participants Curriculum**

**Time Required: 3 hours**

#### **Summary and Rationale**

A person with a criminal conviction faces enormous barriers to employment. This module will introduce participants to the employment barriers faced by persons with criminal convictions and provide them with a systematic way of identifying those barriers. It will also introduce them to the job retention process model and provide them with methods for helping offenders retain employment.

**Performance Objectives:** At the end of this module, participants will be able to

1. list the most critical barriers an offender encounters when entering the workforce.
2. describe a method for identifying the barriers to employment faced by an offender.
3. explain the Job Retention Process model.
4. state at least four common job loss indicators.
5. identify three planning strategies that can be incorporated into the retention planning process.
6. using a case study, apply these strategies to an offender.

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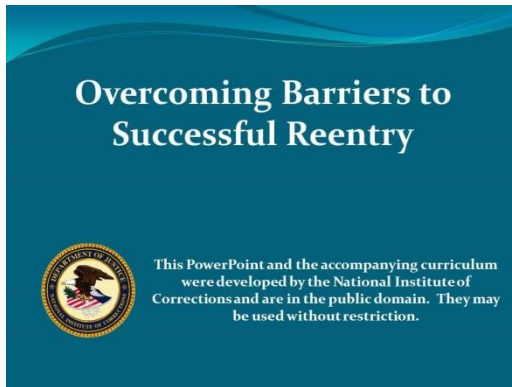
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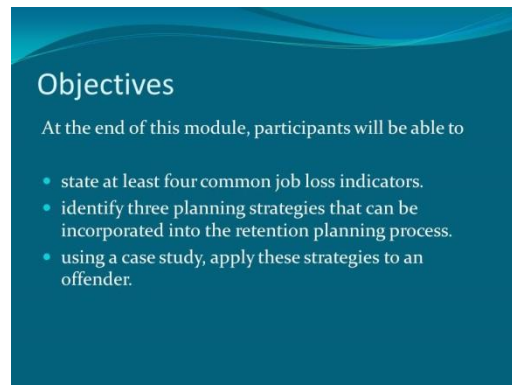
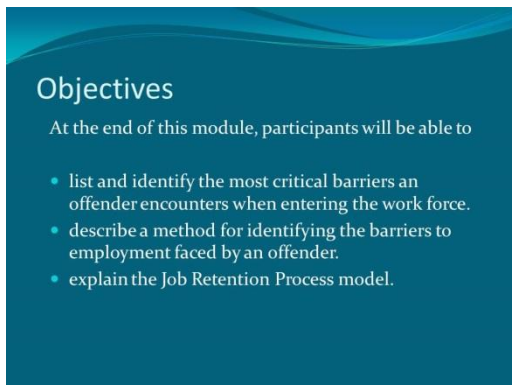
# CONTENT

## PowerPoint 1



In the first part of this module, you will be reminded of 20 barriers that affect offenders as they approach the job search process and attempt to enter the work force. You will also have an opportunity to use the Barriers Identification Worksheet to identify these barriers as you interview offenders preparing to make the transition to work.

## PowerPoint 2 and 3

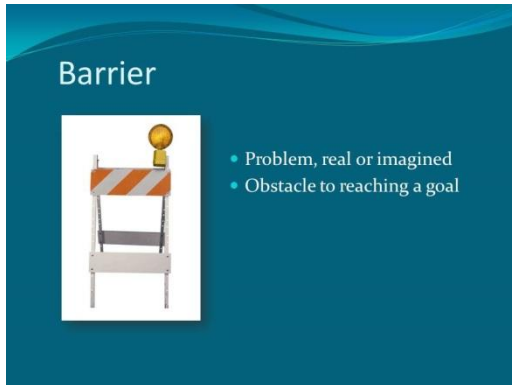


At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

1. list and identify the most critical barriers an offender encounters when entering the work force.
2. describe a method for identifying the barriers to employment faced by an offender.
3. explain the Job Retention Process model.
4. state at least four common job loss indicators.

5. identify three planning strategies that can be incorporated into the retention planning process.
6. using a case study, apply these strategies to an offender.

#### PowerPoint 4



Let's begin with a definition: A barrier is any problem, real or imagined, that is an obstacle to reaching a goal.

#### PowerPoint 5



Some barriers are internal to offenders and their experiences while others are present in the environment. Let's start by looking at some of the dominant internal factors.

Self-concept is the picture that people have of themselves, changing over time.

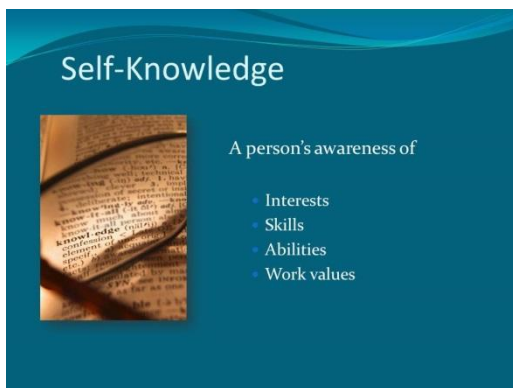
It includes one's view of abilities, worth, interests, values, and life meaning. It may be

- positive or negative
- realistic or unrealistic

- strong or weak
- clear or foggy

As you can imagine, how we see ourselves affects our motivation to pursue a job, persist through multiple failures, and follow through on leads or possibilities.

### PowerPoint Slide 6



Self-knowledge is a closely related concept. It refers to the awareness that a person has of the factors that are important in a satisfying vocational choice—interests, skills, abilities, and work values. Offenders are especially vulnerable in the following areas.

- Since interests are formed in childhood when a variety of activities are offered to children and some are positively reinforced, it is likely that the development of interests was not nurtured by the homes from which they came and that they did not experience positive reinforcement.
- Since approximately 40% of offenders have not completed high school or the GED exam and 40% have reading deficits, it is likely that they have not developed their abilities or had experiences that produce legitimate marketable skills.
- Similarly, since the development of positive values follows the development and recognition of interests and skills, it is unlikely that a positive value system has been formed.


Offenders often do not have the self-awareness or opportunity to identify training programs or jobs that would use their interests, skills, or values. Thus they may start with a job that does not relate to these personal characteristics. Ideally, you would assist them with longer-term goals that represent some career progression.

Offenders may have to start with a job that does not relate to any of these, but they can be assisted to have longer-range goals and make connections from the present realities to future possibilities

## PowerPoint 7

Self-efficacy

- One's belief that he or she can exert control over many, if not most, of life's events.



It is closely related to internal locus of control, which places the responsibility for the actions resulting from that control on the individual – not on others or the society at large.

Review of the literature of criminogenic traits reveals that most offenders do not accept personal responsibility for their behaviors and their outcomes and thus do not buy into the concept of self-efficacy. So, offenders might not accept the personal responsibility of acquiring a job and, if they did, might not assume responsibility for doing what has to be done to keep a job.


Negative beliefs or a negative outlook on life is another common offender characteristic related to self-efficacy and internal locus of control.

Persons who face life with a positive outlook are more likely to have good physical and mental health and to achieve the goals that they set for themselves.

## PowerPoint 8

Planning and Decision-Making Skills

- Typically learned in childhood from parents
- Lack of skills affects ability to set goals, find alternatives, and take action steps



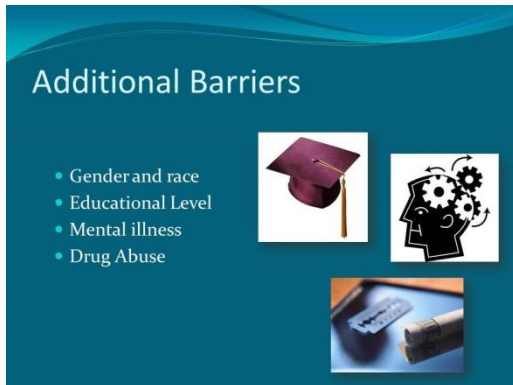
Planning and decision-making skills are learned in childhood, typically because parents help children define some future goal (such as having a good party) and list the things they need to do in order to reach that goal successfully. Again, given what we know about the home environment of most offenders, it is unlikely that they have learned how

to set goals, identify positive alternatives for reaching them, select the best alternative, and move ahead to the desired outcome.

Planning and decision-making skills are baseline skills essential to success in any major endeavor. Since offenders have little or no experience in gaining or using such skills, they may have great difficulty in identifying a long-term goal, finding legitimate ways to reach that goal, and learning about and comparing those alternatives.

In addition to internally held attitudes and beliefs including poor self-concept, low self-knowledge, low self-efficacy, external locus of control, negative beliefs and lack of decision making skills, there are other conditions internal to offenders and their environments that increase risk related to job placement and career development.

### PowerPoint 9

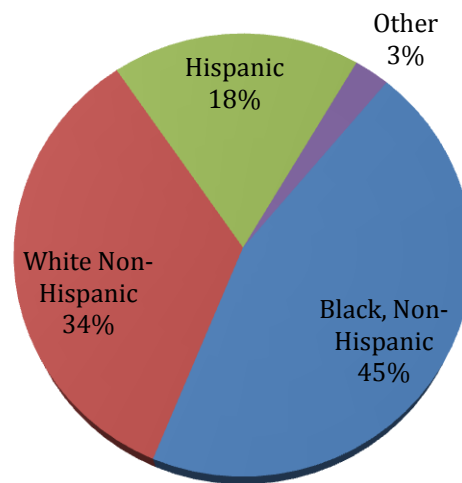


First, let's consider gender and race.

Approximately 93% of state prison offenders are male (Bureau of Justice Statistics' Prisoners in 2002). The racial distribution in 2002 (Bureau of Justice Statistics Prisoners in 2002) was as follows:



## Racial Breakdown



In general, race probably has a greater impact than gender on an offender's job possibilities. Women are a special case, however, since 95% of them have responsibility for child care, another factor that impacts an employer's willingness to hire.

Two additional reality barriers are extremely important – educational level and work experience.

Here are data from 2003 (Bureau of Justice Statistics) about the educational attainment level of members of all correctional populations:

- 18.7% have completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade or less
- 22.6% have completed some high school
- 23.4% have completed the GED
- 22.6% have graduated from high school
- 12.7% have completed some postsecondary work

As the United States increasingly becomes a global member of the Information Age, an education level lower than high school graduation is a severe handicap to finding employment even without a record as an offender. Jobs that can be performed at that level of skill and knowledge are increasingly delegated to computers and/or sent to other countries where the hourly wage is much lower than in the United States. Those jobs that do exist at that level are low-paying and dead-end.

Combined with this picture is the fact that most offenders never learned job-seeking and job-retention skills. For the small percentage that did, their job skills are likely to be

outdated, depending upon the number of years they have spent in a correctional facility and whether or not they were able to get job training while in a correctional facility.

You may be able to do the following to assist offenders to reduce the barrier of poor education:

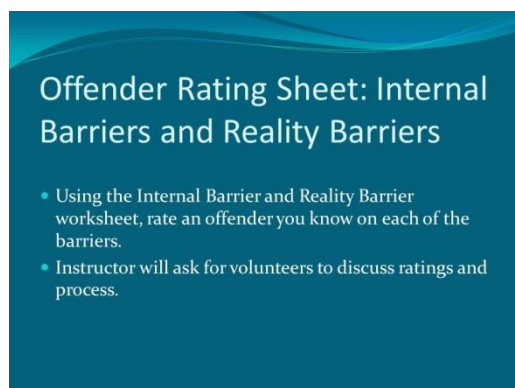
- Encourage development of high-quality educational programs in correctional facilities.
- Encourage offenders to get the GED certificate.
- Advocate for offenders who can profit from vocational education programs.
- Develop linkages with community agencies to provide educational opportunities.
- Seek out employers who have advancement and wage progression related to acquisition of further training.

As if the barriers already enumerated were not enough, the population of offenders has an atypical incidence of physical, mental, and emotional disabilities as well as drug abuse and addiction. It is estimated that a significant percentage of offenders have physical problems of sufficient severity to affect employment, and 16.2% (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999) are judged to have mental or emotional disabilities. In 1991, 21.3% of offenders were in a correctional facility because of having committed a drug offense. Half of offenders surveyed in 1991 said that they had used crack, and 79% said that they had used some form of drug.

You may be able to assist in reducing this barrier in these ways:

- Advocate for drug treatment programs in correctional facilities and upon release.
- Refer offenders to appropriate agencies.
- Become very knowledgeable of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Refer appropriate clients for mental health counseling.


## PowerPoint 10



## PowerPoint 11 and 12


### Additional Barriers

- knowledge of societal norms
- role models
- vocational skills
- knowledge about job-seeking
- knowledge about the work world
- availability of documents needed to get employment



### Additional Barriers

- clothes for a job interview
- transportation
- limitations due to type of offense
- employer attitudes
- child care options
- emotional support




And, still there are more barriers! These are more barriers specific to the condition of being an offender.

- knowledge of societal norms
- role models
- vocational skills
- knowledge about job-seeking
- knowledge about the work world
- availability of documents needed to get employment
- clothes for a job interview
- transportation
- limitations due to type of offense
- employer attitudes
- child care options
- emotional support

## Power Point 13

### Critical Barriers

- Suicide
- Domestic violence
- Drug relapse

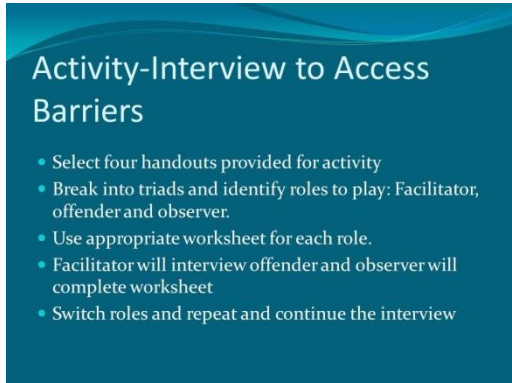


There are three additional and very important barriers that are not on your worksheet:

- Suicide
- Domestic violence
- Drug relapse

It is beyond the scope of this lesson to identify and describe the symptoms or clues that may relate to each of these three additional barriers. They are real possibilities, however, and require immediate referral to individuals and agencies that can deal with these.

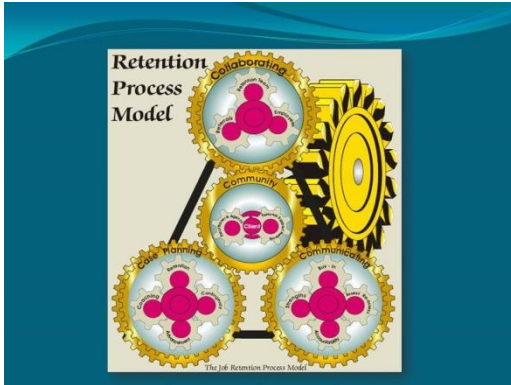
### **PowerPoint 14**



After identifying the most salient barriers for a specific offender, the next step is to find programs and services that can potentially minimize the barriers. It is likely that you are very familiar with the programs and services available where you work. If you are working in a prison, you may need to learn more about those offered in the community. Conversely, if you are community-based, you may need to learn more about programs and services within the prison.

Offenders face tremendous barriers as they attempt to make a successful transition from a correctional facility to full-time work and life outside. Since there is insufficient time and other resources to provide a full range of transition services internally, it is absolutely critical that you be knowledgeable about the external agencies that offer services to offenders. The purpose of this portion of the content is to categorize those agencies, suggest ways in which you can learn about them, and describe methods you can use to assist offenders to take advantage of their services.

## PowerPoint 15



As we all know, job retention is a crucial task related to an offender's successful transition from a correctional facility to the free world as well as a key component in reducing recidivism. Through research, review of literature, and communication with practitioners, a model has been developed that pulls together the essential elements of effective job retention.

As you can see, this is an active model as indicated by the picture of the moving gears and the text within the gears, all of which are active-voice verbs.

Also notice that this is a multi-dimensional model with multiple gears. Each gear impacts another; when one is moving they all are moving; and no one gear stands alone.

This represents the interconnectedness and simultaneous movement of your role as it supports offender job retention by involving:

## PowerPoint 16



- Case Planning
- Communicating
- Collaborating
- Community

Case planning with and for individual offenders is essential to successful job retention. The case plan needs to include the following:

- Contingency plans in case any part of the action plan has to be modified
- Offender understanding of job loss indicators and a commitment to retention
- Plans for advancement beyond the entry-level job the offender may currently hold
- Coaching by you at critical times and ongoing follow-through

In an NIC study of retention in 2000, 77% of the 700 practitioners surveyed reported case management as a very important component of job retention.

### **PowerPoint 17**



Communicating as a strategy for job retention involves using good facilitation skills between and among the offender, you, the employer, the family, and collaborating agencies. Achieving and maintaining this communication involves

- genuine buy-in by all parties to the job placement and retention plan.
- continual assessment and re-assessment of the fit between the job and the offender since practitioners in the 2000 study said that job match was the single most critical key to job maintenance.
- acceptance of accountability by the offender, the case manager, the employer, and the collaborative agencies for the success of the job retention plan.
- continual attempts to identify and use the strengths that the offender has in job skills, personality characteristics, and support system.

## PowerPoint 18



The third gear, collaborating, highlights the importance of the various stakeholders’ – the retention team, employers, and referral agencies – continued effort in providing the services that each provides best and in dovetailing those services.

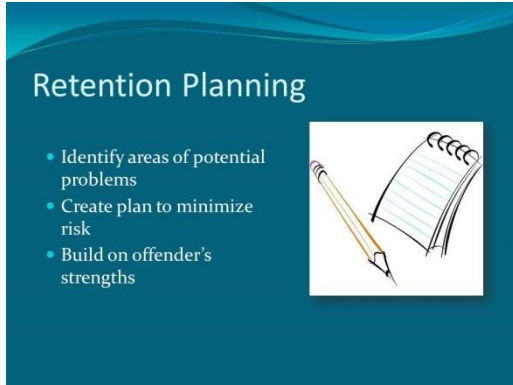
## PowerPoint 19



The fourth gear, community, reminds us that the offender’s job retention plan – in order to be effective – must be surrounded by a community of individuals who have vested interest in making the plan succeed. These entities include

- the case manager representing his or her agency
- the offender, who plays the key role
- the offender’s personal support network, such as family and friends

## PowerPoint 20



Nearly 90% of surveyed practitioners in a NIC retention study indicated that they observed job loss indicators. This fact requires that offender employment specialists develop appropriate, professional relationships with offenders that will allow early detection of job loss indicators.

### Common Job Loss Indicators

- Expressions of job dissatisfaction
- Substance abuse
- Unstable living arrangements
- Chaotic family life
- Missed work or appointments
- Staying out late
- Concern expressed by family

As already stated, a good match between the offender's characteristics and the job's requirements was reported as the single most critical key to retention. Thus, any expression of job dissatisfaction by an offender is an important warning signal.

Practitioners overwhelmingly identified substance abuse as the most common obstacle to offender job retention...thus, it is a second critical warning signal.

The remaining items on the list – unstable living arrangements, chaotic family life, not showing up for work or missing appointments, staying out late possibly with old buddies, and expressed concern by family members – are additional clues to impending job loss.

Recognition of one or a combination of these job loss indicators by an offender employment specialist is a sign that it may be time to activate the offender's contingency plan.

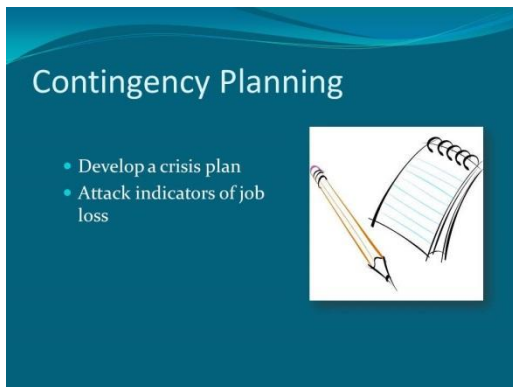


In retention planning, an offender employment specialist proactively and in advance of noting job loss indicators, identifies areas of potential problems, creates plans to minimize risk and builds on offender's strengths.

Reasons for engaging in such planning include the following:

- Transition out of a correctional facility is often a time of chaos and disorganization. A well-thought plan that builds on an offender's strengths and coping skills gives the offender more control during an uncertain time.
- Criminal thinking is impulsive (spur of the moment decision-making) and lacks critical reasoning. A plan assists the offender to refrain from making impulsive decisions that may endanger job retention.

### PowerPoint Slide 21



In contingency planning, an offender employment specialist works with an offender and his/her support system to develop a back-up plan to put into effect if the current job is lost. This contingency plan needs, of course, to also address the specific problems that resulted in job loss.

Contingency planning is a variation, or a second step, to retention planning. Contingency planning focuses on what to do if job loss triggers appear. A contingency plan is very similar to a crisis intervention plan in which you develop a response regarding how you will cope if an unwanted event occurs.

To create this backup, or contingency, plan, the employment specialist and the offender will

- identify the job loss triggers.
- develop appropriate responses to job loss triggers.
- develop multiple options (If A happens, I can do Plan B or Plan C.)

Research shows that role playing responses to triggers will improve the actual responses to these stressful situations.

## PowerPoint22



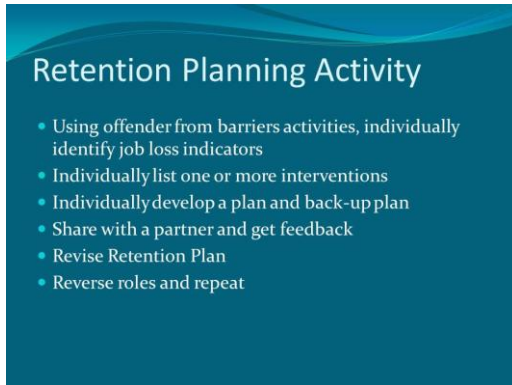
In advancement planning, an offender employment specialist works with an offender, and perhaps also an employer, to develop a plan that will result in some degree of career progression. It is very common for offenders to begin employment after leaving a correctional facility with a low-paying job. This condition results in the need to work overtime to make enough money to survive. The overtime work contributes, in turn, to family problems and general fatigue.

For these reasons and because of the critical importance of having a good job match, it is imperative that employment specialists work with offenders to develop a longer-range plan that will allow them to fill a position that may be a better job match and pays higher wages. Such a plan may involve acquiring additional training or education.

Advancement planning occurs when the offender and the employment specialist set employment goals and create a plan to achieve those goals. The key to success with this approach is that the goals are incremental and achievable.

An interesting component of advancement planning is coaching offenders regarding when, how, and why to quit a job. Sometimes quitting a job is the right choice. Other times, quitting is a permanent solution to what is a temporary problem. The reality is that work is not always enjoyable, and some days it's a pure struggle. Role modeling and discussing coping skills, problem solving skills, and decision-making skills with an offender will increase their comfort with the reality of the world of work

## PowerPoint 23

A blue rectangular slide with a white title and a bulleted list of five steps. The title is 'Retention Planning Activity'. The list includes: 'Using offender from barriers activities, individually identify job loss indicators', 'Individually list one or more interventions', 'Individually develop a plan and back-up plan', 'Share with a partner and get feedback', 'Revise Retention Plan', and 'Reverse roles and repeat'.

**Retention Planning Activity**

- Using offender from barriers activities, individually identify job loss indicators
- Individually list one or more interventions
- Individually develop a plan and back-up plan
- Share with a partner and get feedback
- Revise Retention Plan
- Reverse roles and repeat

## Activity: Offender Rating Sheet

### Internal Barriers

Think about a specific offender you have dealt with recently. Rate him or her on a 1-5 scale in each of the areas listed below. Place a line somewhere between 1 and 5 related to each of the five characteristics.

Self-concept:	Poor					Strong
	1	2	3	4	5	
Self-knowledge:	Limited					Great
	1	2	3	4	5	
Self-efficacy:	Low					High
	1	2	3	4	5	
Locus of control:	External					Internal
	1	2	3	4	5	
Beliefs & attitudes:	Negative					Positive
		1	2	3	4	5
Planning/decision-making skills:	Poor					Strong
	1	2	3	4	5	

Thinking about this and other offenders, what is the typical relationship of offenders to these five areas?

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## Reality Factors

Think of the same person you thought of in the previous section. Place a mark on the line below representing the extent each of the barriers listed here is significant to this person related to employability.

Low    Med    High

Gender \_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_

Race \_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_

Limited literacy  
and/or education \_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_

Limited  
work experience \_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_

Disabilities \_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_

What is your general conclusion about the relationship between these characteristics and the barriers offenders face as they attempt to enter the workforce?

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## Barriers Identification Worksheet

For: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For each of the following barriers, described in this lesson, indicate to what extent this barrier is significant for the person listed above by circling 1 (low), 2 (medium), or 3 (high).

	Significance		
	Low	2	High
1. Self-concept	1	2	3
2. Self-knowledge	1	2	3
3. Self-efficacy	1	2	3
4. Locus of control	1	2	3
5. Beliefs/attitudes	1	2	3
6. Capability to plan	1	2	3
7. Gender	1	2	3
8. Race	1	2	3
9. Education	1	2	3
10. Work experience	1	2	3
11. Work skills	1	2	3
12. Physical/mental handicaps	1	2	3
13. Access to vocational training	1	2	3
14. Knowledge of work world	1	2	3
15. Knowledge – job-seeking	1	2	3
16. Documents – job-seeking	1	2	3
17. Clothes – job-seeking	1	2	3
18. Transportation	1	2	3

19. Limitations – type/place of work	1	2	3
20. Support from family/friends	1	2	3

## Questions to Ask During an Interview to Assess Barriers and Strengths

Select from the following questions and add others as appropriate.

1. How are you feeling about your release from incarceration or community supervision?
2. What are some of the challenges you expect to have when released, or are having since release?
3. How ready do you feel to manage your life outside of a correctional facility?
4. What have you learned about yourself while in a correctional facility or under community supervision?
5. What else do you feel you need in order to be ready to be independent?
6. What experiences have you had in the past in which you successfully handled some significant change in your life?
7. Who is responsible for your life after you leave a correctional facility?
8. What are some interests that you want to pursue in your personal and work lives?
9. What will be some of the most important things to attend to as you start your life in the community, or to maintain your successful transition?
10. What do you think your best work-related skills are?
11. What kind of training or education, if any, have you had since you have been in a correctional facility?
12. How much education did you complete before entering a correctional facility? while in a correctional facility?
13. What kind of education or training do you wish you could have?
14. What kinds of jobs have you held in the past? How did you like each of those jobs?
15. What kind of work will you pursue in the future?
16. Do you know what this kind of work currently requires and how much it pays?
17. What steps will you need to take to get a job?



18. Do you know how to seek a job (find job openings, complete job applications, have an effective interview)?
19. Is there anyone who will help you find a job?
20. Do you have appropriate clothes for having a job interview?
21. Will you have transportation to get you to a job interview and to a job once hired?
22. In what general geographic area will you search for a job?
23. Do you know how to handle questions about your having been in a correctional facility?
24. What kinds of attitudes and behaviors do you think will be necessary in order to keep a job?
25. Do you have any kind of condition that would affect your ability to get and keep a job?
26. Are there any kinds of jobs you would not consider because they have work tasks that would be difficult for you?
27. Do you have the documents you need in order to get a job?
28. Will the kind of crime you have committed limit your possible job choices or place or work?
29. Do you currently take medication for any medical or mental health condition?
30. What will you need to do to stay out of a correctional facility?
31. What are your goals for a year from now?
32. What will you need to do to reach those goals?
33. In the past when you made a decision that had negative results, how did you make it?
34. How do you need to change that method of making decisions?
35. With whom will you live when you leave a correctional facility?
36. Do you have family members and/or friends who will encourage you and help you?
37. Others: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Observer Checklist

As you observe the interview, complete each of the following items, and add other observation notes at the bottom of the page.

### Facilitative Skills

Attending: How well did the interviewer pay attention to the offender in the following ways?

- |   |           |    |                   |
|---|-----------|----|-------------------|
| • Facing the interviewee squarely         | Very well | OK | Needs improvement |
| • Having an “open” body position          | Very well | OK | Needs improvement |
| • Leaning slightly toward the interviewee | Very well | OK | Needs improvement |
| • Maintaining eye contact                 | Very well | OK | Needs improvement |
| • Remaining relaxed                       | Very well | OK | Needs improvement |

Listening: How well did the interviewer listen? Very well OK Needs improvement

Reflecting: How well did he or she reflect? Very well OK Needs improvement

Questioning: How often did the interviewer use these two types of questions?

- Open (cannot be answered with yes/no) Mostly Often Never
- Closed (can be answered with yes/no) Mostly Often Never

### Content

Which questions appeared to be most helpful in gaining valuable information about the offender’s strengths and barriers? (Mark these on the list of questions, or write additional ones in below.)

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What questions might have been helpful if the interviewer had asked them?

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What strengths or barriers did you note that the interviewer did not record on the Barriers Identification Worksheet?

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Other observations: \_\_\_\_\_

## Susan: Case Study for Use with Barriers Identification Worksheet

Susan is a 30-year old white offender who will be released in four months. She has been in a correctional facility for five years, having been convicted for dealing drugs. She dropped out of high school at age 16, and while in school, was frequently absent, had a D-F average, and was often in the office of the dean or counselor. She lived with her mother who worked hard to support her and make ends meet. She found her daughter uncontrollable and often felt overwhelmed with her lot in life. Susan's father abandoned her and her mother as soon as he found out about the mother's pregnancy. Susan has seen pictures of him and heard her mother's very negative description of him, but has never met him.

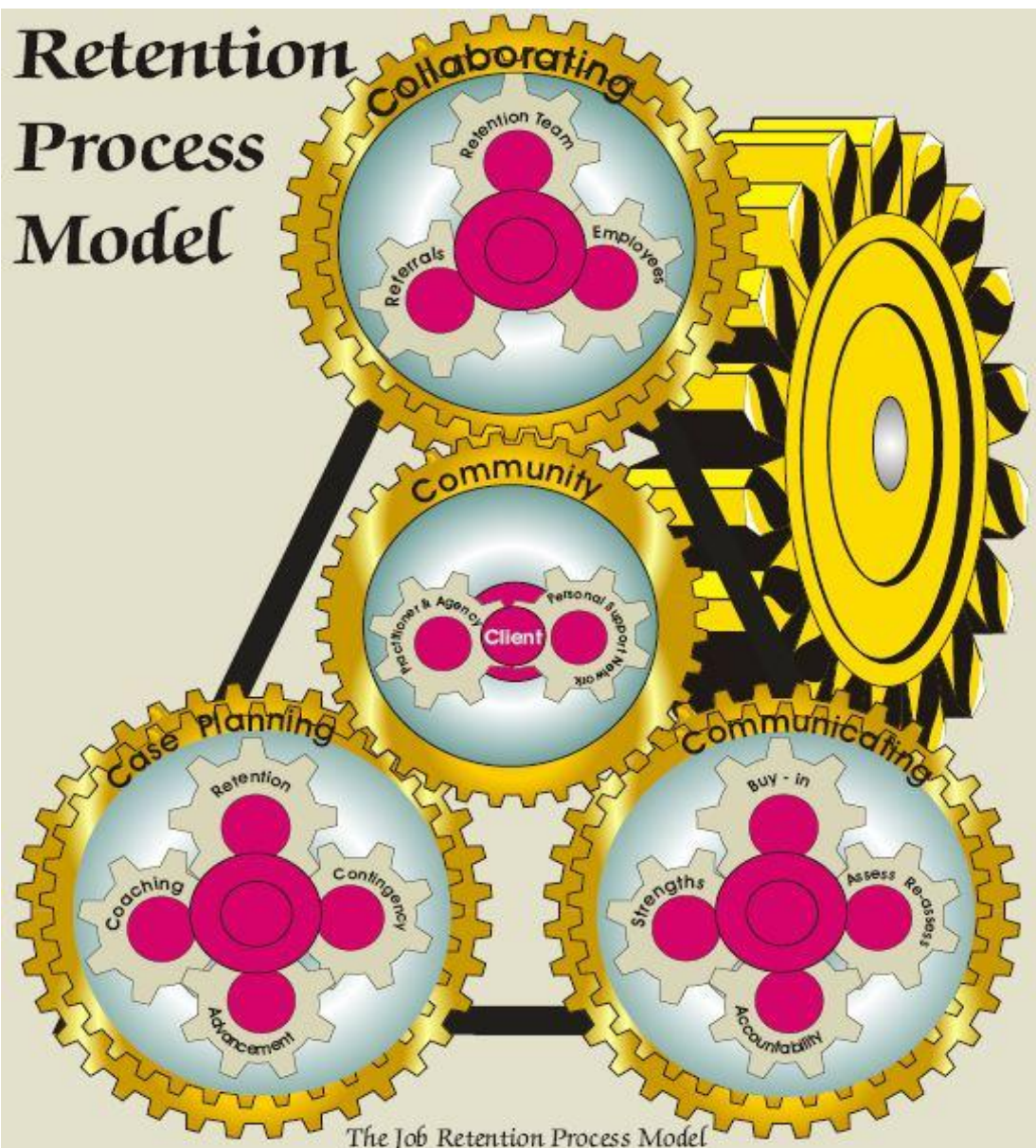
Susan is the mother of three children, ages 15, 8, and 6. These are children of three different fathers with whom there has been no continuing relationship. The men in Susan's life have been abusive to her, and two of them left her as soon as they knew she was pregnant. She became pregnant with the first child while in high school.

When Susan entered a correctional facility, her mother assumed responsibility for the children. She has cared for them during the five years of Susan's term. She has stated that she is willing to provide shelter, food, clothing, and transportation for Susan for a few months until she can "get on her feet," find another place to live, and take the children.

Susan had beginning courses in bookkeeping and typing while in high school. Though she was absent for many class periods and got D's in both courses, she did show some aptitude for them. Susan had one part-time job while in high school – filling orders at MacDonald's.

While in a correctional facility Susan has learned to respect authority and appears to be sincere about wanting to get a job and be able to support her children. She has completed a GED certificate and studied courses in bookkeeping and word processing. She has exhibited a high level of motivation while taking these courses, and her good grades have helped to build a moderately strong self-concept.

# Retention Process Model



### Retention Plan

Participant Name _____  _____	In place/ Resolved	Intervention Needed	Plan	Back-Up Plan
Assessment Area/ Job Loss Indicator				
Legal Concerns				
Transportation for work				
Financial stability				
Housing stability				
Appearance				
Childcare				
General health				
Compliance with system responsibilities (TANF, SSI)				
Family relationships				
Flexibility (ability to deal with change)				
Attitude toward work				
Interaction with others				

**Retention Plan – Revised**

Assessment Area/ Job Loss Indicator	In place/ Resolved	Intervention Needed	Plan	Back-Up Plan
Legal Concerns				
Transportation for work				
Financial stability				
Housing stability				
Appearance				
Childcare				
General health				
Compliance with system responsibilities (TANF, SSI)				
Family relationships				
Flexibility (ability to deal with change)				
Attitude toward work				
Interaction with others				