



## **Cinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency**

*We help make things happen*

**1740 Langdon Farm Road, Cinnati, OH 45237**

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### **Local agencies helping ex-offenders find employment in this tough economy**

(Cinnati, OH) - The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services reported that 465,000 Ohioans were unemployed in December 2008. When Ohio's unemployment rate is at 7.8%, even highly qualified applicants are struggling to find employment. In this economic climate, finding employment may seem close to impossible for individuals with a criminal record marring their applications.

Though extremely difficult in these times, ex-offenders have always experienced tremendous barriers to finding employment. In response to community-wide concern about the difficulties this population faces, the Cinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency (CAA) convened the Ex-Offender Task Force in 2003 (later called the Reentry Coalition). In 2009, CAA hopes to better serve ex-offenders by relinquishing its lead of the Coalition and instead, forging a collaboration with numerous other agencies in a task force led by the new Hard 2 Hire Network. This new task force is calling upon community organizations to work intensely over the next 18 months to enhance community social services for ex-offenders.

The new Hard to Hire Network will build upon the accomplishments of CAA's Reentry Coalition. Under CAA's leadership from 2003-2008, the Coalition worked to:

- Increase the capacity of social service providers to serve ex-offenders;
- Bring attention to ex-offender issues; and
- Provide a forum for networking to help agencies improve their delivery of services.

To accomplish these goals, the Coalition convened a conference for social service professionals, held an information and resource fair for ex-offenders, and organized an informational event with community decision makers to raise their awareness of the barriers to employment for ex-offenders. Due to the Coalition's success under CAA's leadership, the John Glen Institute at Ohio State University awarded the Coalition a Best Practice Award in 2004.

CAA is a private, nonprofit organization that has served as a lifeline for low-income children and adults throughout Hamilton County for more than four decades. The agency provides assistance with employment, supportive services, home energy, early childhood education, home weatherization, housing, and youth programs. CAA provides ex-offender employment services through its own Ex-offender Fresh Start program. Fresh Start provides assistance in finding employment, including pre-employment readiness training such as how to handle questions related to the offense in job interviews. Ex-offenders can enroll in the program by calling 569-1840, ext. 1074.

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