

CURRICULUM
EMPLOYABILITY ASSESSMENT TRAINING
PREPARED FOR THE:
NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF PAROLE

PREPARED BY:

VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE
MARCH 1987

OVERVIEW OF TRAINING

The New York State Division of Parole has engaged the Vera Institute of Justice to work with the Department of Parole (DOP) in Fiscal Year 1987, to develop a larger supply of short term jobs for parolees returning to New York City and to enhance the capacity of line parolees to make referrals to appropriate support service and job placement programs. This training program is the foundation of this latter objective.

In Metro I, the approach being implemented is the training of CSLs who are, in turn, training line Parole Officers in employability assessment.

In Metro II, Employment Parole Officers were trained.

Vera's part of this effort was led by Claire Haaga, Associate Director with the collaboration of Estelle F. Strizhak who headed the training effort, Michael Cafarelli who directs the Vera's ex-offender job placement effort as Director of VDP, and Lillian Mateo who directs the NWP--Vera's primary offering of short term immediate employment to parolees.

The DOP effort is coordinated by Milt Brown, Region I, Client Services Specialist; Al Rosario, Parole Service Program Specialist, Region II, and Terri Wurmser, Client Services Specialist in Parole Central Office, Albany. The continuous and strong cooperation of Metro I Director, Dee Hinton and Metro II Director, Rick Levy have made this training program possible.

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A CURRICULUM: ASSESSING PAROLEE EMPLOYABILITY
A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE LIAISONS AND
EMPLOYMENT PAROLE OFFICERS

INTRODUCTION

Parolees and their needs present challenges to line Parole Staff.

In the first instance, the kind of individual attention each Parolee requires is demanding. In addition, Officers have major responsibility for public safety concerns.

Primary concern for the Parole Officer is ensuring that Parolees on his case load are employed--as a general condition of Parole is employment (for Parolees who are disabled, this condition is generally waived).

In addition, having a job means the Parolee is doing something productive with his or her time. And it means he or she is earning legitimate money. Of almost equal importance are the ripple benefits to the Parolee's own self-esteem and to his family.

But in order for a Parolee to get and keep a job, many other issues must be resolved, or at least begin to be addressed, but for an ex-offender, finding and keeping a job is no easy matter.

The Parole Officer, with the necessary tools, can play an important role in helping Parolees get and keep jobs. As Parole Officers specially selected to focus on employment concerns, you can help line Parole Officers to obtain these tools and to learn how to use them effectively. There are no quick fixes or miracle methods and you will undoubtedly find yourself in problem situations. Rather, the goal of this is to prepare you to train line Parole Officers to assess Parolees' employment and ancillary service needs; to make solid referrals to programs which provide these services; and to provide supportive follow-up services to Parolees placed in jobs.

WHAT THIS CURRICULUM CAN DO

This curriculum is an attempt to take something that you do every day -- assessment -- and to take a look at it and the mechanics of it in the context of a Parolee's employability. Add to this your skills and experience, and, with the information provided, begin to hone your abilities to move Parolees toward employment.

This Curriculum's format of question design is to give you the opportunities to come up with the answers and to give you a chance to look at and think about the answers you come up with.

Because of the way the questions are structured, at different times, for different Parolees, in different years, you may come up with completely different answers. Each time you use this curriculum, don't hesitate to add to it, to include additional questions that are more specific to the issues of the moment. Use yourself as a resource to hone your skills in a particular area of employment assessment. You are the most important resource you have.

This Curriculum is not intended as a one-shot deal, but rather as a resource for you to take with you, use, improve, add to and even redesign. You are the only one who knows, ultimately, what it will take for you to develop your assessing skills. All this curriculum can do is guide you, point you in the right direction, and ask you the questions, until you can ask the important questions yourself.

This Curriculum provides a framework; the content is the experience and expertise you bring to it. What we hope to do in the next two and a half days is to provide an approach into which you can fit your years of experience. Don't hesitate to add questions and information. Your additions will make this curriculum into something that can work for you. The part you add is what can make this curriculum your own. This is an opportunity to put your experience and expertise to work for you.

The intention of this curriculum is to ask you questions in order to have you look at what you know and how you know it. The next steps are to get you to think about certain issues, to prepare you to ask questions of Parolees which will elicit information that you and the Parolees themselves need in order to prepare an employability plan, and ultimately to support Parolees in realizing these plans.

WHAT ASSESSMENT IS AND IS NOT

Assessment is a way to improve sight with insight. Employability assessment is that assessment which focuses on employment issues.

There are several general keys to any type of assessment. They include:

1. Observation
(with both the outer eye and the 'inner eye')
2. Careful listening
3. Asking good questions. Or, perhaps more aptly, asking questions that get to the heart of the matter, questions that get an "honest" response.

It doesn't take a lot of time to do a good assessment; it does, however take a lot of practice.

One of the more subtle issues in assessment is being able to discern the difference between where you're standing on certain issues and where the person you're assessing stands. A good assessor knows very clearly the difference between subject and object. The way a good assessor knows that is because he/she is very clearly aware which motivations and judgements are his/her own and where he or she stands on certain things. In that way, a good assessor can differentiate very clearly between something that is an issue with him/her and something that is truly the issue of the person being assessed.

Assessment is a skill. It is a honed and sharpened sense of vision. It's a kind of muscle that needs practice and exercise to develop and maintain its sharp edge.

Assessment is something you do every day as you evaluate the progress of the Parolees in your caseload. This curriculum is an attempt to take apart the pieces that make up an assessment of employability, to examine them, to hone them, and to see how it may be possible to move on an already difficult and complex task -- assessing a Parolee's employability -- in a way that can give you a clearer sense of what you do, and some support in doing it in a way that works better for you and the Parolee.

Assessment is not blind referral. It is not referring a Parolee to another agency and saying "You handle all these problems on the way to helping this Parolee find a job)."

In that case, you have asked a Job Development Program to make their main task -- finding employment for Ex-Offenders-- secondary. When you "Dump", what you are saying is "Resolving these obstacles (which must take place before employment can even be looked at) is of primary importance. Your work is secondary. And I haven't the time to do this; YOU do this."

But that's not the mandate of a Job Development Program. The responsibility of these programs is to deal primarily with employment and issues related to employment.

The person who has the primary responsibility for assisting the Parolee is, in fact, the Parole Officer. He/she is mandated to provide the Parolee community-based supervision and supportive services.

There is a significant difference between making referrals to specific specialists in a particular field to help the Parolee overcome specific obstacles and "throwing out the baby with the bath". The former may support improved relations with other service agencies. The latter breeds resentment and anger on the part of the agencies to which you've referred; some of that may be shared with you. However, a lot of that will be spilled on the Parolee, further entrenching those judgements and attitudes already in place.

WHY DO ASSESSMENT? - AND WHY ITS IMPORTANT FOR LOOKING AT A PAROLEE'S EMPLOYABILITY

By "getting to the heart of matters", assessment enables you to have a good grasp on a situation in motion -- the Parolee's situation. No human being is ever static, and certainly Parolees go through all kinds of changes. Assessment, by looking incisively at the issues which a Parolee brings, enables you to keep abreast of new developments by having gotten a grasp of the basics of the issues at hand.

In Employability Assessment, you will be examining all the facets of a Parolee's life, and noting how they affect employment and employability. As a result, you will know the strengths and weaknesses of that individual's situation.

** Assessment gives you a guide to the present, a history of the past and clues to the future.

** Assessment is basic to referral. With a good assessment, you can make referrals that work. Because you will have a good working grasp of the constellation of issues each Parolee presents for future needs.

The purpose of developing skills in employability assessment is so that:

1. You have an understanding of where the Parolee is in those aspects of his/her life that directly relate to finding and keeping a job.
2. You can refer a Parolee to the Job Development Program that is appropriate for that Parolee's needs.
3. You can provide the needed support - wherever possible, to achieve the goal of any Job Development Program: obtaining an appropriate job.
4. You can assist in developing the support necessary to retain that job.

In addition, solid assessment skills can be of support to you in determining:

1. How to differentiate your approach with different Parolees.
2. How to work with a Parolee toward the goal of referral to an appropriate Job Development Program, and to help the Parolee to develop the motivation and skills necessary for overcoming obstacles to that goal.
3. How to select the appropriate Job Development Program with a Parolee.
4. How, with the limited time and resources available to you, to give support to the Parolee during the the Job Development process.
5. How to help a Parolee develop those supports necessary to retain a job.

I. ASSESSING EMPLOYABILITY - PRE-REFERRAL ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

How a person feels about him or herself makes a most important contribution to the success -- or failure -- of finding a job.

That "feeling" is the first thing a potential employer perceives about a candidate for a job.

That "feeling" is a reflection of what is going on in a Parolee's two worlds: in the environment he/she finds him/herself upon release and in the Parolee's own internal emotional environment.

By looking at and evaluating the specifics of where the Parolee is now with regard to environment and background, we can begin to get clues about what 1) are current problems and need immediate attention, 2) could lead to problems, and need to be kept track of OR pieces that 3) are current supports to a Parolee, or 4) could be developed or enhanced to support a Parolee's getting and keeping a job.

The format of each portion of this section of the Curriculum is a premise followed by a series of related questions. The goal to start you thinking about what you know and have observed in your experience.

Good assessment is founded on sharp, incisive observation and each question prepared -- and the ones your experience will add -- is another look at the many facets of what it takes to get and keep a job.

Where the questions says "the Parolee," have one in mind. If you find that instead of thinking of someone specific -- either from your current caseload or from your experience, you are generalizing and thinking about "Parolees" as a group, notice that and notice everything that that brings to mind. You may want to write all those things down, and they may prove very useful to you in developing your assessment skills.

When we've seen and done things so many times that they become repetitious, they become familiar. We tend to group them, see them as the same and generalize whether they are people or events. That can create problems in one-on-one relationships. And the relationship between a Parolee and a Parole Officer is very much one-on-one.

After all, who likes to be looked at as a generalization?

Who wants to be seen as a "They"?

1. THE LIVING SITUATION: Where You Live Is Where You Start From.
 - A. What were the Pre-Release plans for the Parolee?
 1. Who did the Parolee plan to live with after release?
 2. Did the plans work out?
 - a. Why?
 - b. Why Not?
 - B. Has there been a change from the living situation planned for the Parolee upon release?
 - C. How does the Parolee feel about the change?
 - D. Do you feel that this change is beneficial to the Parolee? Why?
 - E. What effect do you think the change will have on the Parolee's ability to handle parole successfully?
 - F. How does the Parolee feel about his/her living situation?
 - G. Who is the Parolee living with?
 - H. How does he/she feel about this?
 - I. How do you feel about this?
 - J. How stable does the living situation appear?
 - K. How stable do you think it is?
 - L. How do you define "stable" ?
 - M. How does the Parolee define "stable"?
 - N. Does the Parolee pay rent?
 - O. How does the Parolee pay the rent? What is his rent obligation? How much income does he need to earn to afford his rent?
 - P. What is the neighborhood he lives in like?
 - Q. Is it the same neighborhood where he/she lived before?
 - R. What are the "neighborhood influences"?

- S. What kinds of effects do you think these "neighborhood influences" will have on the Parolee?
- T. What kinds of effects does the Parolee see in these "neighborhood influences"?
- U. Does the Parolee see or express any special problems in his/her current living situation such as:
1. Crowding?
 2. Uncomfortability?
 3. Conflicts with others in the household?
- V. What problems do you see?
What problems do you foresee?
- W. What problems does the Parolee see?
- X. Is there any practical intervention that occurs to you?
- Y. Is there anything you think that you can do to assist the Parolee to improve his situation?
- Z. In your opinion, is the living situation an impediment to seeking employment and keeping a job?

Something to Think About:

Regarding the Parolees in your caseloads who have gotten and kept jobs:

- What was their living situation like?
- Where did they live?
- And with whom?
- Were there any elements in their living situation which contributed to their success on the job?

Please note: Sometimes it's necessary to jump in immediately and do something, especially in order to remove a barrier to a desired goal.

Sometimes, however, it may be more important to notice, to watch, to observe closely in order to find out where the pieces fit, and to suspend judgement until the picture becomes clearer.

Good assessment involves knowing when to make which choice.

Since where you live is where you start from, a living situation can either be a support or an impediment. A Parolee's living situation is key and may be connected to his or her family situation. Many women Parolees have children for whom alternate care arrangements were made while they have been incarcerated; how these women deal with reassuming their child care responsibilities will be a key concern for them. Many male Parolees are also parents but usually have fewer "official" responsibilities for child care. For both men and women Parolees, then, their own responsibilities as parents are an issue to be addressed. In addition, the Parolee's adult family ties play a critical part in his or ability to make it.

But where and what are the family ties -- and how can they help?

2. FAMILY TIES: The Ties that Bind. Or Don't.

- A. Who does the parolee consider to be his family?
- B. Is the Parolee currently living with family?
 - With which relatives?
- C. Was the Parolee supposed to be living with family upon release according to his Release Plan?
- D. What kinds of relationships does the Parolee feel he has with family members?
- E. What kind of support does the Parolee get from family?
 - from which relatives?
- F. Is the support
 - conditional? What conditions?
 - temporary? How long?
 - financial? How much and for how long?
- G. From which relatives does the Parolee want support?
 - Is he/she getting it?
 - If not, why not?
- H. What are the Parolee's obligations to family members--
 - Spouse
 - Children
 - Parents?
 - Are these obligations accepted or rejected by the Parolee?
 - How does the Parolee meet these obligations?
- I. What kinds of problems does the Parolee feel he/she is experiencing within his family?
- J. What do you see?

- K. What does the Parolee think can be done about this?
- L. Do you see any practical intervention?
- M. Does the Parolee want to do anything about his family situation?
- N. What alternate support does the Parolee see for him/herself?
- O. What do you see?

Something to Think About:

Parolees in your caseload who have gotten jobs.

- What kind of supports were there from the family of these "successful" Parolees?
- How did these supports affect or enhance the Parolee's ability to get and keep a job?

One's living situation (and how comfortable that is) and the amount and kind of support you get from family members form the external base environment from which a Parolee looks for for a job.

What's the story on the internal environment -- on the Parolee him/herself?

3. HEALTH ISSUES

Health affects your view of life as well as your ability to function effectively on a day-to-day basis. Certainly, health issues and problems affect not only job choice but job performance.

For a Parolee, health issues -- known and hidden -- and how they are handled are major factors in selecting work and getting a job. What you know about a Parolee's health situation, what steps the Parolee takes upon release to deal with his health issues, and what you can communicate to the Job Development Program, may be crucial to a Parolee's employability.

- A. What do you know about the Parolee's health problems?
 - What does he/she know about his/her health problems?
 - Blood pressure? Diabetes? Heart?, etc.
 - Did Parolee have health problems while incarcerated?
 - Did S/he receive treatment?
If not, Why not?
 - Does the parolee appear to be/report being in good health?
 - What health problems does the Parolee report?
 - Does Parolee take responsibility for his/her own health care?
- B. Are the Parolee's health problems likely to affect his/her employability?
- C. Are these impediments to job readiness or functional capacity?
- D. What needs to be handled now before any further steps are taken with regard to employment?
- E. What kind of medical care is available to the Parolee?
- F. Does the Parolee have any resources to pay for health care?
 - Is he working already, does he have health insurance?
 - Is he eligible for Medicaid?
Has s/he applied?

- G. Does the Parolee have a history of substance abuse?
- Is the Parolee currently abusing drugs or alcohol?
 - If so, which substances? frequency?
 - How does he/she obtain resources to purchase alcohol or drugs?
- H. Is the Parolee currently in a treatment program?
1. If so, what are the details of the program?
 - Which treatment program?
 - How long has the Parolee been in treatment?
 - How frequently does the Parolee attend?
 - Who is monitoring the Parolee's attendance?
 - How does Parolees come to be in the Program?
 - What does Parolee identify as goals of treatment?
 - How effective is the treatment program based on your observation of the Parolee's behavior?
 - Does the program conduct regular urine tests for substance abuse or breathalyzer tests for alcohol abuse? If so, are these results available to you to monitor the Parolee's progress in treatment?
- I. Is treatment for substance abuse a Condition of Parole?
- and
1. Is that Condition being met?
 2. What is the treatment?
 3. When and how often does the Parolee go?
- J. Has the Parolee been in treatment for alcohol or drug abuse before? in the community? in treatment? If so, obtain details of these treatment experiences.

Things to Think About:

If the Parolee is currently abusing drugs or alcohol, he should not be referred to a Job Placement Program, but rather the substance abuse problem should be addressed first.

If you suspect that the Parolee is abusing drugs or alcohol, you should try to arrange for testing of these substances--an objective measure is better than a subjective judgment.

If the Parolee is in treatment for substance abuse, you should make sure the program considers him/her to be in good standing before referring him/her to a Job Placement Program. Then you should assess:

How does the Parolee's current participation in substance abuse treatment affect his/her chances for employment?

Are there Parolees who are or have been in your caseload who have had health problems or substance abuse histories who have gotten jobs?

-- What were the factors involved in their getting those jobs?

-- What had to be in place first for that to happen?

Please Remember:

Job Developers have to convince employers to hire Parolees and other ex-offenders. Solving health problems, being "drug free", and being motivated and ready to work are key to the Job Developer. That a Parolee is working on handling his/problems makes, an important statement to a Job Developer about the Parolee's motivation to get a job.

It also provides the means by which the Job Developer can then try to convince a potential employer -- based on the Parolee's own efforts to remain "clean" and desire to have a job -- to hire a Parolee.

K. What about a Parolee with mental health or psychiatric problems?

- What is the nature and history of the problem?
- What kinds of treatment interventions are necessary here?
- Do you believe the Parolee is employable?
- What steps are necessary to help the Parolee handle a job?

Things to Think About:

1. Health Issues, Assessment and Employability

A. Job Development Programs have specific goals related to obtaining jobs or training or jobs and training for Parolees. A good assessment and a good referral makes it possible for a Job Developer to devote full attention to achieving these goals for your Parolees.

B. What we do not assess -- or refuse to see -- doesn't go away. It comes up later, and may result in having a Parolee terminated from a Job Development Program.

C. No employer wants to hire someone who is on drugs, or who has a health problem --physical or mental -- that is not being attended to, or that --known or unknown -- could be danger to health and safety on the job or for other employees or the business itself. It's a risk.

D. Issues of substance abuse and other health problems need to be addressed up-front as much as possible so that appropriate referrals can be made wherever possible before a Parolee goes to a Job Development Program.

E. Health issues -- physical, mental and emotional and problems of substance abuse -- can, without proper intervention and treatment be obstacles to employment.

2. Assessment and Meeting Conditions of Parole.

Conditions of Parole, as described in a Parolee's release must be met before any referral to a Job Development Program can be contemplated.

These Conditions -- what they are and how they are being met -- are some of the first things a Job Developer will look for in working with Parolees.

Referring Parolees to Job Development Programs without being sure that Conditions of Parole are being met will create serious problems. First of all, it is likely that the Parolee will be dropped from the program.

No Job Development Program can effectively handle a Parolee without some assurance from the Parole Officer that Conditions of Parole are being met. Again, these are the ways that a Job Developer comes to know that a Parole Officer and the Parolee referred are serious about employment. No employer can be approached unless a Job Developer has a sense of the motivation in process necessary for actual job development to take place.

4. EMPLOYMENT RELATED ISSUES

What kind of role does education level and vocational training play in assessing employability?

A Parolee's educational level/ vocational training provide direct clues to you -- and to the Job Developer -- about the Parolee's skills, needs and direction. These clues are important to assessment and to referral to Job Development Programs.

A. Education and Vocational Training: Knowing What You Know

1. Do you know whether or not the Parolee can read and if so, at what level can he/she read?
2. Without giving the Parolee a test, how would you find out?
3. What should you do if he/she can't read?
4. How much of an obstacle is this to getting a job?
5. What does the Parolee tell you about his/her school experience, educational level, and vocational training?
6. Did the Parolee participate in any educational or vocational programs in prison or jail? If so, what were the program's goals? Did this Parolee meet these goals? What did he/she get out of the program?
7. What kind of interest does the Parolee show regarding these issues?
8. What's your sense of this?
9. How is the Parolee's motivation reflected here?
10. How does this information help you in looking at Job Development Programs?

Education and Vocational Training levels -- and interest -- are important clues to assessing a Parolee, understanding the Parolee's history and motivation in these areas as well as concerns in selecting an appropriate Job Development Program for referral.

What other clues can you get from work history -- both formal and informal? How can they shed some light on direction?

B. Work History: What You've Done and What You Like To Do

1. What does the Parolee tell you about his/her job history?
2. What kind of work did the Parolee do?
3. Did he/she like the work?
4. What is your view about this work history?
5. Is there another kind of work he/she would prefer?
6. What is that work?
7. If the Parolee never had a job, why not?
 - Were there barriers to his employment prior to incarceration?
 - Are the barriers still present?
 - How?
8. What does "informal work history" mean?
9. How do you find out about a Parolee's "informal" work history?
 - What clues do you get from that information?
10. What bearing does an "informal" work history have on
 - assessing employability?
 - actually looking for a job?
11. If the Parolee has been in jail/prison more than once, did he/she have a job between serving terms?
 - If so, how was the prior incarceration handled with regard to the job?
12. When the Parolee was working how and why did he/she get into trouble?
13. What are your observations here?
14. During incarceration, was the Parolee involved in any work programs or skills training programs?

15. What were the skills he/she developed while incarcerated?

--Is this a direction to be continued?

Formal work history gives some important information about a Parolee's past. In addition to answering the "Where, What and How Long" questions, formal work history may point you in a direction regarding current possible choices for a Parolee.

However, no formal work history may not be as much of an obstacle as it seems at first. There are training programs in some Job Development Programs specially tailored for those with no formal work experience.

Informal work history gives a sense of where a Parolee's - interests -- and future -- might lie, since usually, these experiences reveal what a Parolee likes to do and things that he/she may be good at doing.

A Parolee who has had a job in an institution or who has been involved with a training program there may have developed a skill to pursue on the outside.

What part do a Parolee's skills and interests play in assessment?

C. Skills and Interests

1. Outside of formal school or prison programs, what kinds of skills does the Parolee have?
2. Is there something that's of special interest to the Parolee?
3. How would you go about finding out this information?
4. Is there something special that this Parolee feels he/she can do?
5. Is there something the Parolee thinks he/she does well?
6. Is there something that others rely on the Parolee to help with, accomplish, fix?
7. Does the Parolee have hobbies?
8. Did the Parolee have a job while in prison/jail?
9. Did the Parolee participate in any vocational training program while incarcerated?
10. Is there something in the way of work that really interests the Parolee?
11. Is the Parolee likely to tell you?
12. If not, why?
13. If the Parolee could have any kind of job he/she wanted, what would he/she take?
14. What kinds of things could you learn from this kind of a question?
15. How do you feel about the Parolee's responses to this kind of question?

Questions about skills and interests can provide clues to the direction a Parolee may really want to pursue -- in spite of all the circumstances that look impossible which surround him/her.

5. MOTIVATION AND JUDGEMENT

This section is prepared a little differently from the others, and is divided into two portions.

In the process of asking certain kinds of questions -- especially ones that may sound irrelevant, you may pick up certain clues about the Parolee, based on your past experience and your intuition.

Sometimes, the purpose of a question, which may seem on its face irrelevant, is to move an individual from his/her usual judgements and motivations. The answer to a "sideways" question often cuts through the layers of circumstance and defense and can get to the heart of the matter.

In assessment, which is a highly skilled form of judgement, it is important to notice when these things go through your mind and to ask yourself : What are the effects of my judgements and motivations on my assessment of this Parolee? Are my judgments and motivations coming from my intuition about this Parolee? Or is it because this reminds me of things I've heard/seen before?

From the other side of the coin, another important question to consider is: "What kinds of judgements and motivations does a Parolee have which can be obstacles to what it takes to get a job?"

What role does motivation and judgement play in assessing employability? Assessment involves trying to get a clear picture of whatever issues a Parolee may present. Sometimes what the assessor believes, based on past experience and judgments can get in the way of what is being presented. In order to ameliorate this kind of problem it is important to recognize when your own judgments and motivations come into play.

Assessment involves a temporary suspension of your own motivations and judgments until all the facts are at hand. The best assessment comes from a clear evaluation of facts--rather than a subjective opinion.

The first part of this section involves a look at yourself, in an attempt for you to become aware of what issue, judgments and motivations you may be bringing to an assessment, so that you can identify them and filter them out without having them obscure the picture of what is being presented to you.

Looking at myself as Assessor:

- A. What kinds of judgements and motivations am I bringing into play in working with this particular Parolee?
- B. What are they based on?
- C. What are these feelings?
- D. Am I willing to look at them dispassionately and without judging myself?
- E. Are these feelings useful?
- F. What do they reflect?
- G. How useful are they in this particular situation?
 - to me?
 - to what I'm trying to do?
- H. Is there anything I want to do about them?
- I. If so, what?
- J. If not, why?
- K. Am I comfortable in separating out my own issues and beliefs from what is being presented and am I ready to go on?

The important thing to remember about judgements and motivations is that everyone has them. And it's not wrong to have them.

An assessment, however, is different from a judgement in that it implies and includes a process. This process is one that involves gleaning, sifting and evaluating to determine the value, significance and meaning of certain features that affect the particular configuration of each Parolee.

Judgements and motivations can interfere with assessment when we take them for granted. In that state, when we are not conscious of them, we don't know they are there, and we are not aware of how they drive our action.

What is being suggested here is to take a look at where you are, and to take stock of that position. What is most important - - and sometimes most difficult -- is to know that it in fact is a

position. Just a position like any other. Its usefulness is because you make it so, and it derives from your experience. Should your experience change, should 'evidence' of 'something better' come in from other quarters, the position might change. Or, more accurately, you might change your position. Sometimes, we may not want to change anything. It is totally your choice.

It has often been the case that, insofar as you hold to something in your position, your actions and other choices develop in such a way that you are proven right. It is interesting that when I change my mind, I often find in my new experience, evidence that my change was 'right'.

A diad -- a relationship of two -- is a most powerful relationship because the balance is complete. In a way, it is like a seesaw. If you exert all the pressure on your side, if there is no resistance, the other side shoots up into the air -- no balance, no control. If the other side exerts pressure, movement becomes difficult, depending on how much pressure is exerted on each side.

If the pressure is equally matched -- resistance against resistance -- there is no movement at all.

Insofar as you have first looked at yourself, and can identify your position on certain issues, it may be a good time to shift perspective and take a look at a Parolee.

For this section, keep a specific Parolee in mind.

What kinds of judgements and motivations drive Parolees?

6. LOOKING AT A PAROLEE: Discerning Barriers

Parolees are products of their own experience, beliefs, motivations and judgments. Assessing a Parolee involves being able to hear those attitudes clearly (without judgment on the part of the Assessor) and to discern how those attitudes may manifest as obstacles which the Parolee puts in his/her own path.

A Parolee makes statements about him/herself not only through words but through behavior, motivation level, and judgments about what is possible. Understanding a Parolee's attitudes, motivations for action and judgments may give you a clearer sense of exactly where the Parolee stands and positions and patterns of behavior he/she chooses.

- A. What kind of "baggage" do you think this Parolee is carrying based on the Parolee's history?
- B. How does this affect
 - judgements?
 - motivations?
 - behavior?
 - attitudes?
- C. What can you say to the Parolee about what you perceive coming toward you in the way of judgement, motivation and attitude?
- D. Does that change anything?
- E. What would make the Parolee change his/her
 - judgements?
 - motivations?
 - attitude?
 - behavior?
- F. How do Parolees show fear?
- G. What do you think they might be afraid of?
- H. What, if anything, do you think they are afraid of ?

- I. Is this Parolee frightened?
- J. How do you know? What are you basing your judgement on?
- K. How would imagine a Parolee's
- fears
 - motivations
 - judgements
 - attitudes
- would be useful to him/her?
- L. What do you think they reflect?
- M. Do you think the Parolee is right?
- N. What does the Parolee really want, and are these
- motivations
 - judgements
 - attitudes
 - fears
- in helping him/her get it?
- O. Is there any way for you to show the Parolee what's standing between him/herself and what he/she wants?
- P. Suppose you could make the Parolee see what actually stands between him/her and what he/she wants. How would you do that? What would you say?
- Q. Do you think what you would say would make a difference to the Parolee?
- R. Is there a way you could do it so that it would make a difference to the Parolee?
- S. If, just to pretend for a minute, you were the Parolee,
- how should someone tell you these things in a way that would reach you, and make you "sit up and take notice"?

T. Would this work for the Parolee?

-- why?

-- why not?

Motivation and judgement certainly affect attitude and behavior. For a Parole Officer, it can affect the way he/she will approach a Parolee.

For a Parolee, motivation and judgement can not only drive a relationship with a Parole Officer but the entire sense of what is "really" possible on the outside.

Fear, in all its strange and various forms, can, among other emotions in equally strange disguises, be a motivating force. One of the things that is often hidden is how a Parolee really feels about his criminal history and the barriers it may present to employment.

7. WHAT ARE POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS TO EMPLOYMENT THAT A CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CAN PRESENT?

Criminal History: Legal Issues for Employment

- A. Of what kind(s) of crime(s) has the Parolee been convicted?
- B. How do you think these convictions will affect possible employment choices?
- C. Based on the Parolee's criminal history, what kinds of jobs do you think should be strictly off limits to the Parolee? Why?
- D. In light of the Parolee's criminal history what jobs would be appropriate for the Parolee?
- E. How would you talk to the Parolee about this?
 - What would you say?
 - How would you say it?
- F. What is the Parolee's reaction to this?
- G. Who else should know this information?
- H. How will you communicate this?
- I. How will this affect your selection of a Job Development Program?
- J. What do you know about legal restrictions on employment of certain kinds and licensure of certain kinds for Ex-Offenders in the State of New York?
- K. What do you know about Certificates of Relief and Good Conduct?
 - Why can they be important?
 - How can they be obtained?
 - What resources can help with this?

L. What do you know about Bonding?

- of what value can that be in helping a Parolee become employed?
- do you know about the Federal Bonding Program and how it works?
- how might these issues, and knowledge of them, affect your choice of a Job Development Program for the Parolee?

II. THE EMPLOYABILITY PLAN - WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS A GOAL

In the first section, we have looked at the configuration of issues that a Parolee presents upon release from incarceration.

Each of the sub-sections which requires assessment contains a myriad of obstacles to employment. In many cases, the Parolee may already be convinced that he/she is a "hopeless case" and may present you with the behavior to prove it.

And, not every case may be resolvable. Certainly, not immediately.

There may be times when you feel overwhelmed, when you may feel that, based on the first section of Assessment, the obstacles are so numerous there is no way they can be overcome.

If that is the case, and you believe it, there is nothing you can do without help. Whether you communicate it directly to the Parolee or not he/she will pick it up. These are the cases where you should turn to your CSL or Employment Parole Officer for help. It is acceptable to admit you do not know how to handle a particular case--you are not expected to be all things to all people. Very often two heads are better than one.

Now that we have a sense of what the obstacles to employment are, let us turn to how you work with the Parolee to develop a plan.

Try this exercise with regard to a specific case. Start by selecting a Parolee you can work with (after all it's his/her life). You can provide the structure and some back-up ; they have to provide the will and the action.

GOAL -- Referral to an appropriate Job Development Program

STRATEGY -- Together with the Parolee:

-- List all the Obstacles

-- Prioritize them in order of urgency and importance.

TASK -- Develop a Plan for Removing Each Obstacle. Remove them one by one and check them off.

In the first section we talked about the power of the diad-- a relationship of two -- because it was complete and balanced.

In a seesaw, which involves a relationship of two, one is either up or down, depending on which side exerts the most pressure. If the pressure is balanced, no one moves.

In order to achieve the Goal--Referral to an Appropriate Job Development Program--something else has to enter into the relationship: The Parolee must become engaged with you in a process. Not the up and down of the seesaw, but a process--the process of removing the obstacles to employability--one by one--so that: 1) You can refer a Parolee to a Job Development Program and 2) that Program can devote their undivided attention and skills of their Job Developers to finding employment for the Parolee.

What are the pieces of the employability plan?

In addition to removing some of the obstacles that have come up in looking at issues of family, health, previous history, living conditions, etc., one of the issues requiring immediate attention is:

What is the Parolee's immediate source of income?

How can that be stabilized while you proceed in the direction of your goal, the Job Development Program for full-time permanent employment for the Parolee?

A. Income Source: The Short Range

While the Parolee is removing, with your help, the obstacles, whether they be health, treatment program, etc., and while an appropriate long-term employment plan is being developed with the assistance of a Job Development Program, the following issues need to be addressed:

1. What is the Parolee's source of income during this period?
2. What resources are available to the Parolee:
 - Part-time employment?
 - Temporary employment?
 - Public Assistance?
3. Is the Parolee eligible for the Neighborhood Work Project (NWP) which offers 4 months of part-time (4 days per week) employment at \$4.15 per hour ?
4. Is the Parolee immediately eligible for any other short-term employment program?

5. Is the Parolee eligible for Public Assistance?
Is this appropriate, necessary? (Public Assistance can be a helpful bridge to provide income until employment is secured; as a long term option, public assistance does not offer the Parolee much of a future.)
6. How should this referral take place?
7. Can the Parolee's family help with interim financial support?
 - Are there short-term possibilities of help from family members?
 - Can you approximate how long it will take to resolve major obstacles, so that the Parolee can present that help to family members as a short-term, finite period of time?

* Things to Think About:

One Short Range Option *

NWP, The Neighborhood Work Project, is a program of the Vera Institute.

NWP is first of all a not-for-profit construction company that only hires ex-offenders and Parolees who are within 30 days of their release.

NWP provides short-term employment in construction work -- demolition, decoration, construction, clearing -- for those ex-offenders who are willing to do physical work and to abide by certain basic rules which are explained to them at the NWP worker registration.

NWP currently pays \$4.15/hr, with a check every day for a four-day work week. The fifth day is the Optional Day, which the Parolee or ex-offender uses to work on other issues in his/her life, or to begin to look for permanent full-time employment.

NWP workers can work for a maximum of 75 days. NWP hires men and women and, with five workers to a supervisor, teaches basic construction skills and provides, in addition to a day's pay for a day's work, re-entry skills in what it takes to work together under the direction of a supervisor to get a job done, to get to work on time on the assigned days, and to demonstrate motivation to work.

NWP provides at the time of Registration, a hard-hat, steel-toed work boots, gloves and a mask, as well instructions about the first work assignment. There is no delay in getting started and other than having release papers and a Social Security Card, there is no other screening.

NWP relies on an Parolee's motivation to get to work, and can provide an important transition for Parolees.

B. CASE MANAGEMENT AND ITS RELATION TO DEVELOPING AN EMPLOYABILITY PLAN

One of the phrases much discussed in talking about any kind of client-related services is "Case Management".

What does "Case Management" mean on the day-to-day level?

And how can it help in assessing a Parolee's employability?

On a day-to-day level, for employment assessment, case management means working out an employability plan for a Parolee based on the individual's needs and following through with the execution of the plan.

Case management means working out what must be taken care of, step by step, in order to get to get the Parolee to the point of being referred to a Job Development Program.

Case management involves setting realistic goals in realistic time-frames in a step-by-step manner with the Parolee. It means getting the Parolee to be responsible, under your guidance to affect those small alterations -- those small wins - - that gradually lead in the direction of important changes. It includes, so that the larger plan can be achieved, the acknowledgement and praise of each small win. Reinforcement is key to maintaining any small change and getting the maximum momentum out of it.

Case Management is a process that uses your greater knowledge and experience in helping to teach a Parolee how to plan to have something he/she wants.

The employability plan needs to start with a series of "baby steps". A lot of "small wins " need to be built in along the way by you.

Small wins are a very important part of any plan of action. They enable both you and the Parolee to feel that you have achieved something on the way to your main goal. They give you the extra steam to go ahead, and they help you see that you are moving along on the track you set out.

1. Go back to the exercise of "GOAL, STRATEGY, TASK".
2. Take a look at the employability plan you've developed.
3. Where are the "small wins" in your plan?

4. How would you make note of those "small wins" with the Parolee?

Let us also remember that things rarely -- if ever -- fall in neat packages or categories. You are familiar, I'm sure with the phrase "The best laid plans of mice and men..."

One of the important values -- of both assessment and making an employability plan -- is that you know more, up front, about all the problems and the risks. In the long run, that makes it easier to work through last minute changes and emergencies. Through a good assessment you may already know some "back up" help and support areas that can be pulled in with regard to specific Parolees. What that means is that when "something happens" it may be possible to go ahead, perhaps without much shift in direction.

The value of assessment is that it makes problems navigable. It becomes easier with the facts you have at hand to make changes or amend the plan you've developed, and in many cases, you may even be able to keep whatever momentum has been built. Most important -- both for you and for the Parolee -- you can still maintain the sense of getting somewhere.

The employability plan, then, becomes the foundation, and as it progresses, a solid base. After you have had some success in removing some of the main obstacles to considering employment, the next question is: How to select a Job Development Program?

C. NEXT STEPS: SELECTING A JOB DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Now that you know many important pieces of a Parolee's past and present that directly affect employability -- such as health, substance abuse problems, skills, work experience, interests -- as well as those things which will indirectly affect employability -- such as living situation and family ties and support, it is important to familiarize yourself with the different kinds of Job Development Programs available.

There are three basic possible components to Job Development Programs. They are: 1) Education 2) Training 3) Job Placement. Programs vary in their emphasis and in which components they offer. Some programs may initially accept ex-offenders and then refer them to other agencies as being "trouble placements". Counselling is a part of all Job Development Programs, however, the quality of counselling and placement vary tremendously from one program to another.

In addition, many programs have a specialty. For example, they may serve anyone but have special success with Hispanic clients or they may serve only Veterans.

* How to Select a Job Development Program *

1. How would you find out about Job Development Programs and where they are located?
2. What about the program's location?
 - How could that be important to a Parolee?
3. Are there any requirements or restrictions for prospective clients?
4. What are program's goals?
5. How do those goals, requirements, restrictions match up with the Parolee's needs?
6. Do they have experience with ex-offenders?
7. What components do they use?
 - Education?
 - Training?
 - Placement?
8. How long is their training program?
 - What part of the program stipended?
 - For how long?
9. Does the program place their clients in jobs?
10. How long does it take the program to place their clients?
11. What percentage of their clients do they place?

Depending on the plan you work out with a Parolee, and upon what the Parolee wants, it may be possible for a Parolee to be part of more than one program. A Parolee may decide to start work on a high school equivalency or learn to read through a tutoring program at the same time he or she is involved in a Job Development program.

You will want to know all about the variety of Job Development Programs in your area so that you have a number of possible referrals on hand once you assess a Parolee.

It is important that the Job Development Program selected reflect the Parolee's need, and that the counselling/education/training lead toward the goal of placing a Parolee in the right kind of job.

Selecting a Job Development Program is a goal in developing the Parolee's employability plan. When major obstacles to employment have been removed, and it's time to select the Job Development Program that's right for the Parolee, the employability plan doesn't cease; it moves to a different level.

Once a Job Development Program has been selected, the employability plan can be modified to work in tandem with what the Job Developer is doing. In that way, Parolees get double benefits: the benefits of the Job Development Program, and at the same time, continuing with you, to work on securing that job by continuing to remove and refine problem areas in the Parolee's life.

The assessment skills developed in looking at all the aspects of a Parolee's life will be useful in assessing Job Development Programs. Only after that assessment has been made can there be a clear sense of which Job Development Program is right for the Parolee.

And, of course, before the Program is chosen, obstacles that were picked up in assessing the Parolee have to be addressed as part of the plan so that a Parolee can get the maximum benefit from the Job Development Program selected.

Now that we've looked at how to select a Job Development Program, let's review how a Job Development Program works?

III.

THE JOB DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

A. The Steps to Getting a Job

1. External Assessment

Using the Vocational Development Program as an example, let's examine how a Job Development Program works.

To begin with, VDP only works with ex-offenders. Aside from that, it has no special requirements for clients. However, those who cannot speak, read and write in English may have some problems.

VDP has three steps to its program before an ex-offender meets with an assigned Job Developer to review employment possibilities.

During Orientation, VDP is explained and, in that half-day, the Parolee has a chance to familiarize him/herself with the program. An individual is given an application to fill out and is given a test to determine reading level and comprehension.

The second part of the program is Life Skills, and during this two-day workshop, a Parolee becomes a participant as he/she learns and develops job-seeking skills. Again there is ample room for VDP staff and the Parolee to get to know each other. During this time, the Parolee develops some in-depth background about job experience and skills and education.

The third part of the program is an in-depth interview, and an Intake interview, in which the Job Developer determines the Parolee's eligibility for training programs based on skills, interest, and experience.

If the Parolee is eligible, there are OJT (on-the-job training) programs, where more skill is required for a position than a Parolee has but where the interest, and the will to learn is there. There are also stipended AWE (Adult Work Experience) Programs for Parolees with no prior employment history.

VDP does not offer specific Training Programs. At VDP, ex-offender is developed to meet the ex-offender's needs in the direction of securing full-time employment.

The first and third parts of VDP's pre-employment search program -- the testing and filling out an application as part of Orientation, and the in-depth Intake interview -- are the beginning of VDP's fine-tuned assessment with regard to job placement and the counselling and guidance that will be needed in order to obtain that job.

Clearly, the better your assessment of the Parolee and his/her situation, the more fine-tuned VDP's (or any other Job Development program's) assessment can be. Job Developers have specialized assessment skills that are related to employability and employment. When you have assessed whether this Parolee is ready for what a Job Developer can offer, you have made it possible for a Job Developer to concentrate on what he/she can do best: find out what kind of training program and/or education and/or employment would really work for this Parolee.

A Job Developer's combination of special assessment skills related to employment issues, and his/her knowledge of the job market, the labor market, how employers react, and what special kinds of problems ex-offenders face result in a kind of expertise essential for Parolees.

By your having cleared certain obstacles to employment, and by your knowing through assessment those unstable aspects in a Parolee's personal configuration of issues, a Job Developer is able to devote his/her complete energies and attentions to working with the Parolee.

2. Internal Assessment

The steps to getting a job require lots of external assessments. In addition, however, lots of internal assessments -- particularly on the part of the Parolee -- are also necessary.

The plan you have made with the Parolee for removing obstacles and the steps the Parolee has taken under your supervision to remove those obstacles have begun to give solidity to a situation so fluid that it can slip right through your fingers. The introduction of the shape of a plan and the sense of direction from it, begin to give form to the fog of uncertainty.

The Job Developer can now devote his/her time to the job issues and the internal needs of the Parolee: building self confidence, learning how to handle interviews, how to deal with disappointment, feeling comfortable in talking about the past, and not only looking beyond the past in order to see the future but actually catching a glimpse of it.

At VDP, Job Developers explain to ex-offenders that VDP doesn't "get" them a job; that is something they do themselves. VDP gives them the skills, the knowledge and the opportunity to get a full-time job if they are serious and ready.

Being serious about getting a job and being ready to get one are two very important features of the job development process. Being serious about getting a job means actually believing that it's possible to have one. Being ready means being willing to take the risk and being willing to stumble and fall in the process; it means putting out the effort and the will to get what you want.

Both of these require, in addition to a developing sense of self, some on-going support.

At VDP, no ex-offender is dropped from the program unless he or she drops him/herself, stops participating, stops coming and stops trying.

Job Developers at VDP have special skills and, through their experience special ways of supporting Parolees and ex-offenders when the road looks very difficult. VDP places 70% of the ex-offenders who complete the three-part program and work with an assigned Job Developer.

What other kinds of on-going support can help a Parolee while he/she is going through a Job Development Program?

B. On-going Support

Trying to find a job can be a stressful situation under the best of conditions. Trying to find a job, if you are a Parolee, is certainly not easy.

In addition to the support of family members during this process, what role can a Parole Officer play with regard to on-going support during the Job Development process?

Look at the following questions and think about the kinds of contacts you have had with Job Developers and Job Development Programs regarding Parolees.

1. How often do you call Job Developers?
2. For what reasons do you call them?
3. How would you characterize your contacts?
 - friendly?
 - angry?

4. In your opinion, what is the Job Developer's responsibility?

-- Did you feel he/she was living up to his/her responsibility?
5. Have you ever worked with a Job Developer to help a Parolee find a job?
6. Have you ever asked a Job Developer how the Parolee is doing in the process of finding a job?
7. Have you ever asked a Job Developer if there is any additional information needed about the Parolee?
8. How often do you respond to calls from Job Developers?
9. Have you ever asked a Job Developer if there was any way in which you could be of assistance or support to that Job Developer in working with your Parolee?
10. Have you ever asked a Job Developer how you could provide some outside support to your Parolee to reinforce what the Job Developer is trying to do?

Reinforcement is an important part of learning. It is an important way to strengthen new attempts; it is an important support in making the small steps that make big changes possible.

Once a Parolee is referred to a Job Development Program, the employability plan makes an important shift in direction. Now the employability plan can work in tandem with the Job Developer.

Job Developers are skilled reinforcers. They know that for ex-offenders to be placed in jobs in the community many little changes have to occur -- in dress, in attitude, in sense of self and in sense of other. Part of the Job Developer's skill is to find out what a Parolee wants in employment and make it safe for him or her to want that and to take the risks to make the changes to get that.

Having worked out with the Parolee the employability plan that removed the obstacles to getting the Parolee to the right Job Development Program, the Parole Officer now has the opportunity to continue the employability plan in tandem with the Job Developer's employment plan for the Parolee.

What that does is to give tremendous reinforcement to the progress you have made together. Your continued reinforcement of the employability plan serves a reminder that there is more to do, and that the same skills that got the Parolee to the Job Development Program can get him even further. By being in contact with the Job Developer, you have the opportunity to support and reinforce those things that come up as part of the Job Development Program. People learn faster when they are reinforced in a variety of ways from a variety of sources.

Your weekly meetings with the Parolee, short though they may be, are an important opportunity to reinforce what is going in the Job Development Program, and to push it ahead by continuing to work with the Parolee on the employability plan you have created together.

By being in contact with the Job Developer, you have an outside source -- aside from the Parolee -- to tell you how he/she is doing. Your involvement could be a crucial support to keeping a Parolee on track in obtaining a job.

Have you ever been in touch with a Job Developer to find out how one of your Parolees is progressing?

If so, what questions did you ask?

Did they reflect your needs or the Parolee's needs?

C. Job Placement

At VDP, Job Placement is an exciting moment--not just because of the accomplishment in an ex-offender getting a job, but because your Parolee has managed to put together the skills, the questions, the answers, the behavior, the attitudes discussed in the job development program and for one brief moment make them his/her own, and make them work.

How have you complimented your Parolee for getting a job?

D. Job Retention

A. Support to Continue

Now the support and reinforcement needs to continue.

1. What kind of support does your Parolee need after he/she just begins a job?
2. What sources of support does he/she have?

3. What role do you play in supporting your Parolee?
4. What kind of continued support can come from the Job Developer?
5. What kind of on-going support does the Job Development Program have?

-- and for how long?

6. For what period of time does the Job Development Program follow up on your Parolee's placement?

-- How frequently do they follow up?

7. How often are you up-dated on your Parolee's situation?

6. What other kinds of resources in the community are available that could be helpful to your Parolee?

Now that your Parolee has developed the skills to get a job, what does he/she have to learn in order to keep it?

And how can you detect when there are problems brewing?

B. Problems on the Job.

1. How would you learn about whether or not your Parolee is having problems on the job?
2. Name several resources available to you to find out this information?
3. Is there any value to discerning that there "may be problems on the horizon"?
4. What would you do, once you found out the information?
5. How would you handle it?

The employability plan does not end with finding the right Job Development Program for your Parolee. The plan merely changes direction and level, and provides a framework for continuing your efforts to remove obstacles and to work in tandem with the Job Developer to support the Parolee in keeping the job.

The employability plan does not end once your Parolee has found a job. Rather, by continuing to remove hurdles in your Parolee's path, it serves as a continued support.

Because the employability plan remains active (there are always impediments to be worked on), the assessment muscles remain constant, which means that there is always new information at your fingertips.

Now the employability plan is transformed into what it takes to keep a job. That is, learning those skills and judgements that are needed to work out problems as they arise.

1. How can your Parolee learn these skills?
2. What groups are available in the community to help?
3. What resources do you already know?
4. Who can you ask to find out more?
5. How much time do you spend with your Parolee each week?
6. Do you tend to feel that because this Parolee already has a job, he/she doesn't need much of your attention any more?
7. How much time do you spend with your Parolee each week discussing his/her employment?
8. How important is maintaining this employment to your Parolee?
9. How important is maintaining this employment to you?
10. What kinds of resources are available -- either in your Parolee's Job Development Program or in others that can give you and the Parolee background in making the choice to move on to another job.