

# Economic Self-Sufficiency



## OUTCOME TEAM ROSTER

**Commissioner Deborah A. Lieberman**  
Montgomery County Commission  
Co-Champion

**Willie Walker**  
The Dayton Urban League  
Co-Champion

**Erthale Barnes**  
Montgomery County Department  
of Job and Family Services

**Catherine M. Brown**  
Talent Tree

**Kathy Emery**  
City of Dayton

**The Hon. Dennis J. Langer**  
Montgomery County Common Pleas Court

**Jan Lepore-Jentleson**  
East End Community Services Corp.

**Heath MacAlpine**  
Montgomery County Department  
of Job and Family Services

**Lucius Plant**  
Montgomery County Department  
of Job and Family Services

**The Hon. Walter H. Rice**  
United States District Court

**Joseph Tuss**  
Montgomery County Community and  
Economic Development

**Donald A. Vermillion**  
University of Dayton

**Commissioner Nan Whaley**  
City of Dayton

**Gary J. Williamson, Ph.D.**  
Job Center

### STAFF:

**Heath MacAlpine**  
Montgomery County Department  
of Job and Family Services

**Joyce Gerren**  
Human Services Consultant

**Beverly Pemberton**  
Montgomery County Department  
of Job and Family Services

## VISION

Residents have access to employment that provides a living wage and benefits. Barriers to employment, including transportation and day care issues, are minimized. Adequate opportunities for lifelong learning help prepare the workforce for the realities of 21st-century jobs. Educational, vocational training, and worker retraining services are readily available to support the needs of residents and employers.

## ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY OUTCOME TEAM REPORT

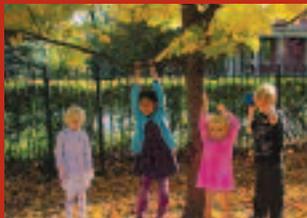
A disturbing feature of economic conditions today is the number of employed people whose earnings are insufficient to lift them above the poverty line, let alone enable them to be considered self-sufficient. Others, such as those who are homeless and those being released from prison, face additional barriers to employment before they can even begin to achieve economic self-sufficiency. In response, the Economic Self-Sufficiency (ESS) Outcome Team formed three work groups, each with a diverse and knowledgeable membership, to tackle the following issues:

- 1) Poverty Reduction / Workforce Development;
- 2) Homeless Employment; and
- 3) Ex-Offender Re-entry Employment.

In 2007, each work group reviewed local and national statistics; identified factors contributing to poverty and unemployment, as well as barriers to economic self-sufficiency; researched local and national best practices; and consulted with national policy and program experts. As a result, the ESS Outcome Team completed work and offered recommendations to the Homeless Solutions Policy Board and facilitated the creation of a community-wide taskforce on ex-offender re-entry.

Based on findings and recommendations from the Poverty Reduction Work Group the ESS Outcome Team has adopted the following focus areas for 2008:

1. Focus on families with children living in poverty.
2. Develop a community-wide plan to reduce poverty that builds on best practices; connects existing local poverty reduction efforts; and establishes measurable goals and outcomes.



3. Emphasize, facilitate, reward and celebrate intergenerational education and skill building to increase math, literacy, life skills and vocational options for low income families.
4. Incorporate best practices including: place-based / neighborhood initiatives, incentives, structure, high expectations, support, and staff with the skills necessary to establish relationships with families and deliver results.
5. Provide a pool of sustainable resources for successful programs.

### Poverty Reduction/Workforce Development Work Group Findings

This work group is building on other efforts in this community going back at least two decades. (See timeline on the following page.) They began by facing the stark reality that poverty is a growing problem. In 2006, the Census Bureau estimated that 10.7% of Montgomery County’s families were living in poverty, up from 8.3% in 1999. Poverty for families is more than twice as high in Dayton, where the rate rose from 18.2% in 1999 to 21.6% in 2006.

Where there are high rates of poverty, there are often high proportions of adults without a high school diploma or equivalency; of families which are headed by a single parent, predominantly female; of teenagers having babies; of poor housing and environmental conditions; and of people belonging to a racial or ethnic minority. In other words, privilege and opportunity are not evenly distributed and efforts to reduce poverty must acknowledge that place matters and that neighborhoods count.

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for more in-  
depth analysis*



Poverty reduction efforts must also incorporate a long-term approach, taking into account the tendency for poverty to pass from one generation to the next. The disturbing reality that children growing up in the conditions described above are more likely to do poorly in school means that THEIR chances as adults of obtaining high-quality employment – and thus of achieving economic self-sufficiency – are also diminished.

The work group also observed that the policies and guidelines surrounding the existing array of work and training supports— Food Stamps, Title XX child care, S-CHIP, and Medicaid, to name a few—often make it difficult for low-wage workers and their families to get and maintain these benefits. In addition, families can quickly “fall off the cliff” and lose benefits once their earnings increase. For example, once an Ohio family’s earnings reach even one dollar above 150% of poverty, their Title XX child care funding is completely eliminated. On top of these problems there are few, if any, financial incentives for low-wage working parents to fit additional education or training into their non-working hours.

The challenges outlined above exist in a job market that has been significantly restructured in recent years. Montgomery County lost 42% of its manufacturing jobs between 1970 and 2000. Since 2000, the Dayton region has lost another 25,000+ manufacturing jobs. These and other living wage (>\$15 per hour + benefits) jobs have been replaced by jobs which are often part-time and which provide few or no benefits—retail sales persons, cashiers, waiters and waitresses, food preparers and servers, laborers and material movers.

## Homeless Employment Work Group Findings and Recommendations

As part of the community's Ten-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and Reduce Overall Homelessness (see page 65) the local programs providing services to people who are homeless have begun working more closely together. This includes a wide array of employment and education resources.

The Homeless Employment Work Group learned from these local providers what national research has confirmed: homeless adults—when provided with a combination of stable housing, supportive services, and opportunities for education—can succeed in obtaining and maintaining employment.

The work group also learned that the barriers faced by these people are staggering. Saddled with poor employment histories, physical and behavioral health problems, stigma and discrimination, less than 9% of the 3,500 adults served by the local homeless provider network in 2005 had income from employment. Of the rest, about one-third had income from sources other than wages (e.g., public benefits) and two-thirds had \$0 income.

Within the local housing and shelter network, transitional housing programs and programmatic shelters set high expectations and use an array of in-house and community resources to connect their residents to training and employment. However, accessing those resources can be challenging for homeless adults. In preparing recommendations to address this challenge, the work group looked across the country to communities where the workforce development system and the organizations providing services for homeless people are working collaboratively to provide a one-stop location for comprehensive service delivery. The Group also looked to housing and shelter providers that offer their residents a comprehensive range of supports, transitional jobs and placement in permanent employment.

Looking at the local community through the lens of such national best practice models, the work group concluded that

- interagency planning & programming is limited;
- few employment providers separately track their homeless clients;
- multiple assessments are conducted but rarely shared; and

- homeless adults must visit multiple sites for employment and supportive services.

Based on these and other findings, the work group made the following recommendations to the Homeless Solutions Policy Board, which endorsed them in July, 2007:

1. Engage the community in supporting and providing a range of education, training and employment opportunities for homeless single adults, parents, older youth and young adults, including transitional jobs leading to permanent employment and self-sustaining social enterprise businesses.
2. Connect employment to placement in stable housing for homeless singles moving into River Commons permanent supportive housing.
3. Increase use and ease of access to one-stop employment services by homeless adults.
4. Develop single point of entry, assessment & linkage to comprehensive services and a client-centered, outcome-driven funding strategy.
5. Improve employment outcomes for residents of permanent supportive housing by increasing collaboration among employment and housing providers, and marketing the Medicaid Buy-In program to residents with disabilities, their families and the staff who work with them.
6. Help formerly homeless adults maintain stable housing and manage their income by increasing their financial literacy and providing them access to affordable banking services.

## Ex-Offender Re-entry Employment Work Group Findings and Recommendations

This work group found that, on average, 30 adults were released from Ohio prisons to Montgomery County each week during 2007. While ex-offenders now live in every community within Montgomery County, two-thirds of them are concentrated in neighborhoods already challenged with significant pockets of poverty and high unemployment.

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1987-1994	1988-1995	1989-PRESENT	1995	1997	1998-1999	1998-2003	1998-2001
Dayton Foundation Self-Sufficiency Program	New Futures/ Youth and Family Collaborative	Parity 2000 (became Parity, Inc. in 2000)	City of Dayton adopts Poverty Reduction Policy	The Job Center opens / Workforce Policy Board formed / Welfare Reform underway	Out-of-school Youth Task Force	Manpower Development Research Corporation Jobs-Plus Demonstration at DeSoto Bass Public Housing	City of Dayton National League of Cities Workforce Initiative

The work group also learned that during the six months prior to incarceration, 42% of inmates from Montgomery County lacked a high school diploma or GED, 54% were unemployed, 75% abused drugs and 40% abused alcohol. Montgomery County's high recidivism rate, 44% (the highest among Ohio's six largest urban counties), is one costly result. In 2007, 69% of the county's General Fund budget was spent on criminal justice services.

Research confirms what common sense predicts: ex-offenders who return with little or no family and community support, no income, poor job skills, untreated alcohol or drug abuse problems, and no stable place to live are much more likely to re-offend and return to prison. To make matters worse, overcrowding in Ohio's prisons results in shorter lengths of stay so most prisoners do not receive needed medical, behavioral health or educational services while incarcerated.

Of special concern to the work group is that most return to the community with major barriers to employment, including:

- ⊗ felony convictions and a sporadic work history;
- ⊗ inadequate education, skills, and experience;
- ⊗ lack of or limited community support systems;
- ⊗ employers' unwillingness or inability to hire ex-offenders;
- ⊗ collateral sanctions that legally bar ex-offenders from holding specific jobs or vocational licenses;
- ⊗ lack of civil legal assistance with child support arrearages, debts, suspended driver's licenses, etc.

Although employment is a key component to successful re-entry, it is not a standalone strategy. Research has shown that the family, friends and community of the ex-offender can play an important role in helping to create a stable social environment that leads to successful reintegration. Reducing recidivism benefits the ex-offenders, their families, as well as the community by:

- ⊗ enabling them to become productive tax paying citizens;
- ⊗ reducing crime resulting in safer communities and safer schools; and
- ⊗ reducing criminal justice costs.

Locally, there have been encouraging, but limited, community efforts to assist ex-offenders with employment opportunities. The work group feels that in order to have a greater impact on successful re-entry, the community must invest time and resources to deliver effective programs and services. Public and private resources must be woven together into an effective continuum of care that is outcome-driven and easy to access and navigate.

Therefore the Ex-Offender Re-Entry Work Group made the following recommendations to the FCFC which, in October, 2007, accepted them and approved \$350,000 for their implementation:

1. Create a Community-Wide Re-entry Task Force to develop a comprehensive plan and Continuum of Care with specific goals and measurable outcomes.
2. Develop and implement a community outreach, engagement and advocacy campaign to create awareness of successful re-entry; generate acceptance of ex-offenders; and inspire community action.
3. Develop a partnership with the State to pilot programs that will prepare incarcerated residents for successful re-entry and productive employment.
4. Designate a Re-entry Employment Implementation Team to significantly increase funding for transitional jobs; engage employers as key partners; develop a real-time job bank for employing ex-offenders; and, develop a single point of entry, assessment and linkage to comprehensive employment and support services.
5. Strengthen the local re-entry Continuum of Care by utilizing existing information systems to track participants, and monitor services, progress and outcomes.
6. Seek multi-year funding to provide flexible, client-centered, services and supports that result in successful re-entry.
7. Build the organizational capacity of and coordination among existing community and faith-based re-entry programs.
8. Develop a re-entry housing plan with adequate funding to provide a range of transitional and permanent supportive housing options.

1999-2006	2000-PRESENT	2000-PRESENT	2001-PRESENT	2005-2008	2006-PRESENT	2006-PRESENT	2006-PRESENT
Dayton Foundation Diversity Task Force	Targeted Community Based Collaborative (TCBC) Program	TCBC Neighborhood-based Workforce Development	Dayton Area Earned Income Tax Credit Outreach & Tax Prep Campaign	MDRC Work Advancement & Support Center Demonstration at the Job Center	Dayton Foundation/Dayton Business Committee Minority Inclusion Committee	Minority Economic Development Council of the Minority Inclusion Committee	FCFC Economic Self-Sufficiency Outcome Team