



24-5274

DATE: April 15, 2024 (Item No. k)
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Javier Aguirre, Director, Reentry Services
SUBJECT: Proclamation of April as Second Chance Month

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Adopt Proclamation declaring April 2024 as “Second Chance Month” in Santa Clara County and encouraging County officials and employees, local employers, and residents to participate in or host associated activities or events. (Diversion and Reentry Services, Office of the County Executive)

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommended action will carry no fiscal implications.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION AND BACKGROUND

Support for Second Chance Month spans the country. The White House has proclaimed April Second Chance Month each year since 2018. The National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC), funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, also recognizes Second Chance Month. And the Lansdowne, Virginia based nonprofit Prison Fellowship, an advocate for prison reform and the organization that spearheaded Second Chance Month in 2017, reports that since 2017, more than 25 states have recognized April as “Second Chance Month.”

The United States incarcerates 565 people per 100,000 residents, more people per capita than any other nation.^[1] Nationally, almost 80 million Americans have an arrest or conviction record.^[2] The vast majority of citizens in jail or prison are coming home one day. Access to affordable housing, jobs, education, medical care, support networks, and financial institutions are vital to helping many individuals successfully return to their communities. Yet often our formerly incarcerated residents are unable to access these necessities due to their records. For example, 75% of individuals who have been incarcerated remain unemployed a year after their release.

^[1] Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2024 by the Prison Policy Initiative, March 14, 2024
Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2024 | Prison Policy Initiative

^[2] The Whitehouse Briefing Room: Presidential Actions: A Proclamation on Second Chance Month 2023:
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/03/31/a-proclamation-on-second-chance-month-2023/>

Santa Clara County residents who have completed their sentences, and/or rehabilitation, face similar challenges. Of the clients who sought services at the County of Santa Clara Reentry Resource Centers (RRCs) in San José and Gilroy as of year-to-date 2024, 67% were unhoused and about 77% were unemployed at the time of their first visit.

Current Services to Support Second Chances

The RRCs in San José and Gilroy strive to provide individuals recently released from custody the resources and opportunities they need to be successful. The centers offer a wide array of services in areas such as medical care, job training and employment, public assistance, housing support, education, life skills, record expungement, peer-to-peer mentorship, and more.

In addition to the employment readiness and placement resources that the Office of Diversion and Reentry Services (DRS) provides through its partnerships with community organizations and County partners, it also launched two social enterprise programs. In 2022, it contracted with REDF to work with community-based organizations on creating one or more social enterprises to employ clients with criminal records. And in 2023, it partnered with ESO Ventures to launch a business incubator program that, at the end of last year, concluded classes with its first cohort from which four new businesses were formed. A second cohort has launched with 14 participants.

The County also now has staff dedicated to helping individuals with lived experience apply for County positions, and DRS alone has employed more than 10 individuals with misdemeanor and/or felony records. Some of those individuals have had their records legally expunged.

The RRCs also assist clients with education. The RRC in San José has an in-house high school diploma program and DRS partners with San José City College to offer the Alcohol and Drug Studies Reentry Peer Mentor Program on site at the San Jose RRC. Participants earn certificates in alcohol and drug counseling, enabling them to apply for entry level jobs in that area.

While entities like the RRCs and their many County and community partners are making an impact, breaking the revolving door of incarceration and its underlying causes requires widespread community partnership. Employers, landlords, educators, healthcare professionals, residents, and many others all play a vital role in helping reentry clients become self-sufficient, contributing members of our communities.

Second Chance Month Events and Outreach

To increase awareness of the challenges and potential solutions to barriers that the justice involved face, DRS is joining other communities around the country in recognizing April as Second Chance Month. Locally DRS and the Office of Pretrial Services are partnering with the Adult Probation Department to host Probation's annual Employment/Resource Fair on April 24. More than 25 second chance employers and resource providers will attend to connect with clients.

The Reentry Centers and partners have seven other Second Chance Month activities planned to include three April workshops at the San José RRC on employment resources and the expungement process. They are also hosting a panel of second chance employers, job training organizations and educators. To engage the broader community, DRS has partnered with the Office of Communications and Public Affairs to produce an updated version of the County's "We Believe in Second Chances" public service announcement featuring County leaders and staff, employers, former Reentry clients, and legislators.

The County continues to stand in solidarity with communities and states nationwide that recognize the huge potential of Americans both in custody and after release from our carceral systems. While reoffenders often make the news, there is much less coverage of the thousands of individuals coming home, healing families, obtaining meaningful and sustainable employment, and mentoring others struggling to rebuild their lives. County staff supporting reentry clients have seen what they can accomplish if given the resources, tools, and moral support they need to reach their goals. So, again this April, the County of Santa Clara helps to remind its residents and those of this state, country and beyond about the power of second chances.

CHILD IMPACT

The recommended action will have no/neutral impact on children and youth.

SENIOR IMPACT

The recommended action will have no/neutral impact on seniors.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The recommended action will have no/neutral sustainability implications.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

The proclamation declaring April 2024 as Second Chance Month will not be adopted as a consequence of negative action.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

The Clerk of the Board is asked to process one framed proclamation and to notify Lynn Madden in DRS to arrange for pickup and display at the San José Reentry Resource Center.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Second Chance Month Proclamation 2024