

Alternative Workforce Specialist

Through a shared position with the Department of Corrections, Commerce works with offenders at four correctional facilities in partnership with Barton Community College and Washburn Tech on career and employment development on a pre-release basis. Two federal grants, one through the U.S. Department of Education and the other through the Department of Justice, help fund the postsecondary training. As an example, the first cohort of twenty-seven female offenders at the Topeka Correctional Facility recently completed Certified Production Technician (CPT) and forklift certification training as well as Kansas *WORKReady!* certification testing. Results have included all participants receiving forklift certification, 96% passing one or more modules of the CPT program, and *WORKReady!* certificates earned at the following levels: 6 gold, 13 silver and 2 bronze. Of the male offenders participating in pre-release training at Ellsworth and Larned Correctional Facilities, 70% of those released within a year have gone on to employment and/or continuation of training. Juvenile offenders at the Larned Juvenile Correctional Facility have also gone on to continue education and/or employment post-release.

We might consider adding the following: The shared position works aggressively to coordinate with the **KANSASWORKS** workforce system, community corrections, parole, court services, local economic development and employers to help support the successful transition of offenders into employment and/or workforce training. Post-release employment is a key factor in lowering recidivism.