

The SECTOR Program

Overview: JCOD's SECTOR program combines workforce development, case management, Cognitive Behavioral Intervention, and paid training in high-growth sectors that result in employment with family sustaining wages.

Challenge: As of May 15, 2025, 13,104 individuals were incarcerated in County of Los Angeles (LA County) jails, making it the largest jail system in the United States. An average of 5,200 individuals are released from the jails per quarter, and approximately a third of the 46,000 individuals paroled out each year reside in Los Angeles. Justice involved individuals have an unemployment rate of 30%, significantly higher than the 4.2% unemployment rate of individuals without justice involvement, and studies suggest that justice involved individuals earn 30% less than their counterparts. Unemployment greatly increases an individual's risk of recidivating. Current research suggests that sturdy, full-time employment that provides higher earnings than minimum wage reduces the likelihood of a justice involved individual reoffending. Even with local and state fair chance laws, justice involved individuals still face barriers to obtaining sturdy employment including employer bias, inconsistent employment history, and disparities in education.

Solution: JCOD's Skills and Experience for the Careers of Tomorrow (SECTOR) program provides justice involved individuals with free training in 9 targeted high-growth careers while they receive case management and peer mentorship services from certified peer support specialists. Participants obtain incentives for completing training and program milestones or are paid stipends if enrolled in a transitional subsidized employment program. A core component of SECTOR is a Cognitive Behavioral Intervention (CBI) group program tailored specifically for individuals returning from incarceration, designed to support individuals in returning to work and succeeding in employment. JCOD contracts with eight community-based organizations who are knowledgeable and trusted in their communities to provide SECTOR services.

Innovation: The SECTOR program is designed to remove barriers and expand access to career pathways for individuals impacted by the justice system, who often face significant challenges in securing stable employment. SECTOR's innovation lies in its holistic and wraparound approach to supporting individuals and its direct pipeline into high growth sectors. Many participants come from historically underserved communities where economic opportunities have been limited due to systemic obstacles, such as prior involvement with the legal system, lack of access to education, and social stigma. To

address these disparities, SECTOR prioritizes training in industries with strong long-term growth and career advancement potential, ensuring participants are not limited to entry-level jobs but have opportunities to build sustainable careers. The program offers individualized support, recognizing that each participant's journey is unique. By providing tailored case management, mentorship, and wraparound services—including mental health counseling, housing support, and substance use treatment—SECTOR meets individuals where they are and empowers them to succeed.

SECTOR also partners with employers and training providers to create direct employment pipelines, helping participants navigate and overcome hiring biases. By fostering relationships with businesses that value second-chance hiring, the program contributes to a broader shift in workplace culture, encouraging more inclusive hiring practices. Additionally, SECTOR continuously evaluates labor market trends to ensure participants receive training in sectors that provide family-sustaining wages and long-term stability.

Results: Since launching in January 2021, over 3,000 unique individuals have enrolled in the SECTOR program. Over 1,500 have completed job training, with 1,076 obtaining employment in a high-growth sector with an average salary of \$24/hr. JCOD is still working on collecting employment retention data, but preliminary results found that 75% of program graduates were still working a year after obtaining their first post-enrollment employment. A third-party evaluator analyzed local court and probation data to determine that 95% of SECTOR participants do not recidivate up to two years post-enrollment in the program.

Replicability: SECTOR's innovative model can be replicated across jurisdictions through identifying high-growth careers unique to a local market and contracting with local and trusted training providers to provide training and create pipelines to employment. Drawing on expertise from individuals with lived experience, especially those with certifications to provide peer support services, and incorporating CBI into the program can ensure the necessary support for individuals who have been impacted by the criminal justice system to obtain and thrive in their careers.

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Additional Materials: [SECTOR video](#); [MDRC SECTOR Evaluation](#)