



From Corrections to Careers

For Southeast Correctional Center in Missouri, Reentry Efforts Go Hand-in-Hand with **ACT® WorkKeys®** and the **National Career Readiness Certificate® (NCRC®)**

ACT® WorkKeys® Assessments are the cornerstone of ACT workforce solutions. The assessments measure foundational skills required for success in the workplace for all types of individuals across society, including men and women leaving prison and reentering society.

Poor employability skills among ex-offenders is a challenge upon release, and employers are often reluctant to hire ex-offenders. Employers are more willing to make the necessary investment in human capital and advancements in workforce development in our communities when an ex-offender has a national credential — such as the ACT® WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate® (NCRC®) — upon institutional release.

“We’re in the business of helping people be successful and be productive citizens. So why not do everything in our grasp to help them do that?”

—Lorene Armstrong, Functional Unit Manager, Missouri Southeast Correctional Center

Setting the Standard at Southeast Correctional

Around 19,000 men and women are released every year from the 21 prisons throughout Missouri, and data show if these individuals can gain employment soon after release, the chances of recidivism are much less. “We were challenged by our warden to come up with some out-of-the-box ideas when it comes to reentry,” said Lorene Armstrong, a Functional Unit Manager from the Southeast Correctional Center in Charleston, Missouri. “The WorkKeys Assessment was just a natural fit since it gave offenders a tool in their toolbox when they actually started applying for positions.”

SINCE 2018
290
Offenders
HAVE TAKEN
The Test

Southeast Correctional Center discovered WorkKeys by partnering with the Missouri Job Center and the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development. More than 30 offenders were being tested monthly, sometimes twice a month pre-COVID. “Reentry is one of our main focuses in Missouri,” said Lorene.

As part of the reentry efforts, the reentry team has stayed in close contact with employers, who frequently express their appreciation of the program. “Ninety percent of these guys will be released from prison one day, so the employers really appreciate that we are doing all we can to help them become the best candidate and better neighbors.” While visiting Southeast Correctional Center, Missouri Governor Mike Parson learned of the reentry efforts and wanted to know more. “He was really impressed with our reentry efforts,” Lorene said.

At the end of the day, Lorene and others at Southeast Correctional Center are working for something bigger than a paycheck. “It’s not just a job for us,” Lorene says. “We’re passionate, and we really take this seriously.”

At ACT, we’re proud to provide a tool that helps formerly incarcerated men and women get back on their feet — and into the workforce.