

# News Release

For Immediate Release: June 19, 2019

## **Durham Launches Transitional Jobs Program for Justice-Involved Residents**

*New Program Provides Temporary, Wage-Paying City Jobs & Support Services*

DURHAM, N.C. – It can be tough to find a good job with a livable wage. Now, imagine trying to find steady work if you have a criminal record. The task can be daunting and disheartening.

The City of Durham Office of Economic and Workforce Development has partnered with the Durham Innovation Team (I-Team) to address this issue through the launch of their new [Transitional Jobs Program](#), which is providing temporary, wage-paying jobs with benefits as well as support services to people who have difficulty getting and holding jobs in the regular labor market.

The new program joins [two additional programs now underway](#) to help improve economic opportunities for Durham residents. “The new transitional jobs program is part of a larger suite of ideas – including our *Welcome Home* and *Durham Expunction and Restoration (DEAR)* programs – that the City is exploring to improve economic opportunity for Durham’s justice-involved residents,” said Innovation Team Director Ryan Smith. “These three programs are working together to advance Durham as a city of second chances and greater shared prosperity. As a result of these combined efforts, we are doing more to welcome people back home from incarceration, to remove barriers to employment through license restoration and expungement, and to provide short-term employment that builds job readiness.”

Beginning last month, 10 justice-involved residents started their six-month temporary employment with four City departments – Transportation, Public Works, Solid Waste Management, and General Services – where they are now receiving on-the-job training and transferrable skill sets to help them move into permanent future employment, either with the City or the private sector.

According to Senior Employment Program Coordinator Courtney McCollum with the City’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development, this program is critical for people who have criminal records, little-to-no work experience, and who need to support themselves and their families. “This program is providing structure and income as well as skill-building opportunities and a platform for entering the full-time labor market with the support of intensive case management, job development and mentoring,” McCollum said. “We’re using and expanding the network of private and public employers of our existing Justice-Involved Program to serve as worksites or workplace labs – teaching participants how to work while performing hard skills and displaying appropriate soft skills while earning wages.”

In addition to hard skills training, they are also receiving career readiness and human resource development training through Durham Technical Community College as well as the potential to attain occupational skills certifications and mentoring. Thus far, the participants are excited for the opportunity for a fresh start. “This opportunity means a lot to me. It gives me a chance when others close the door in my face. This would happen as soon as they learn that you are justice involved,” said Cavin White, a participant in this year’s program who is working in the City’s General Services Department. “This program shows if you are dedicated and educate yourself you can succeed. The program gives you a fighting chance to prove yourself.”

“It means so much to me to have this opportunity. It has been a dream come true. It has allowed me to be the man I knew I could be. I plan to give this program my all. I am so thankful for being in the first group to be hired,” said William Yates, another participant in this year’s program who is working in the City’s Public Works Department. “I want others to know that we plan to turn darkness into sunshine for others who will eventually participate in the program. All I want to be is trusted!”

According to McCollum, the program is an expansion of the City’s existing [Justice-Involved Program](#) and the next phase is getting buy-in from local, private-sector employers to provide permanent employment to participants who have graduated from this program. “This program allows employers to determine the skills they want from potential employees and encourage them to hire based on the skills the participant has displayed despite a criminal background,” McCollum said.

For more information on the transitional jobs program, visit the [program webpage](#) or contact McCollum at (919) 560-6880 ext. 248 or [Courtney.McCollum@DurhamNC.gov](mailto:Courtney.McCollum@DurhamNC.gov).

### **About the City of Durham Office of Economic and Workforce Development**

Guided by the City’s [Strategic Plan](#), the [Office of Economic and Workforce Development](#) helps ensure that Durham has a strong and diverse economy by increasing the city’s tax base through several revitalization initiatives, including new development efforts in the central city area. The department also plans and promotes cultural awareness and events, identifies and recruits target industries as well as assesses and trains Durham residents to fill new jobs.

###

101 City Hall Plaza, Second Floor, Durham, NC 27701

919.560.4123

[DurhamNC.gov](http://DurhamNC.gov)

Follow Us @CityofDurhamNC

