



**NEWS from the Shelby County Mayor's Office
of Innovation & Performance Analysis**

Lee Harris, Mayor

Vasco A. Smith, Jr., Administration Building
11th Floor, 160 North Main, Memphis, Tennessee 38103

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JULY 19, 2023

Danielle Inez
Director of Innovation
Office: 901.222.2018
Email: dani@shelbycountyttn.gov

**SHELBY COUNTY TARGETS “SECONDARY” CHALLENGES TO RE-ENTRY WITH
“EARN WHILE YOU LEARN” TRAINING PROGRAM**

***The Office of Re-entry's FOCUSED Training Program will now include a bi-weekly stipend,
participant report card, and a career aptitude assessment.***

Beginning this week, Shelby County Government's Office of Re-entry is accepting up to 20 ex-offenders for its six-week FOCUSED training program. Formerly incarcerated individuals who are looking to jumpstart their careers will have an opportunity to learn foundational and industry-specific skills to help strengthen their resume. Individuals who complete the program successfully will receive personalized job placement support. To apply, Shelby County residents can visit www.SCOfficeOfReentry.com.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, formerly-incarcerated adults are more likely to experience long periods of unemployment, face discrimination during the job search process, and struggle financially. When people with felony convictions do find a job, the work is more likely to be temporary, part time, and low paying.

In Shelby County, more than 95% of currently incarcerated people will eventually be released from prison. This year alone, as many as 2,200 individuals will return home from the County's Division of Corrections. One in three of them will be re-arrested or return to prison if there is not significant intervention.

The revamped Office of Re-entry FOCUSED program will include a daily work schedule from 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM on Mondays through Fridays. Participants will earn a stipend equal to a \$17/hour wage. Along with a job-preparedness curriculum, participants will learn about career

VASCO A. SMITH, JR. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
160 North Main Street, 11th Floor Memphis, TN 8103
901-222-2000 Fax 901-222-2005
www.shelbycountyttn.gov



opportunities in HVAC repair, trucking, photography, clerical services, and environmental services. As a part of the six-week series, participants will also complete an aptitude and personality assessment to help expose strengths and skills that might lend to long-term career success.

Dominique Winfrey, Deputy Director of the Shelby County Office of Re-entry: “If we're going to complain about a problem we must also be willing to aid in the solution. I am excited about the FOCUSED “Earn While You Learn” program because it will help our previously incarcerated neighbors remain home. It's important that we provide training to prepare them for future careers, but we can also provide these adults with real-time compensation to help address immediate life needs.”

Harold Collins, Chief Administrative Officer of Shelby County Government: “The FOCUSED Program has always existed to provide the necessary supports for people who are actively trying to make better decisions. This expansion to provide pay and career development support will be life-changing for our participants. I commend Director DeAndre Brown, the Office of Re-entry leadership, and the Office of Innovation for making this program available to such a vulnerable population.”

(end of release)