

IPI's quality products and exceptional service ensure customer satisfaction while our work training opportunities make brighter futures possible for Iowa's offenders.

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IPI and Racial Disparity in the Criminal Justice System

What is IPI doing about Racial Disparity within our prisons?

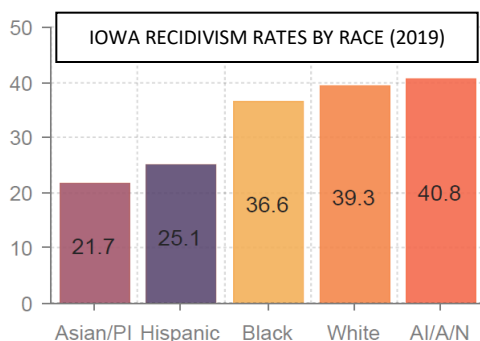
Black men and women comprise about 4% of Iowa's population, but 25% of Iowa's state prison population. This is one of the largest disparities in the nation.

Within the criminal justice system, IPI and the Iowa Department of Corrections do not determine who gets arrested and prosecuted, who gets convicted, or a person's sentence - these fall to local law enforcement and the court system.

What IPI and the DOC do is take in the men and women sent to us by the courts, keep everyone safe and secure, attend to their needs for mental health treatment, medical treatment, drug addiction and so on, and prepare them for an eventual return to their community. Over 90% of the men and women in our state prisons are scheduled to be released! And the best way to help these men and women, and help our state, is to prepare them for reentry.

People leaving prison with a felony record face a steep uphill climb. Returning to the community without a high school diploma, with untreated mental health or addiction issues, or with no employable skills - these are all factors that can lead people to return to prison. The uphill climb for Black men and women leaving prison is even steeper - the obstacles in obtaining housing, transportation, and a good paying job are formidable.

This is where the IPI program comes in - we prepare men and women for their return home, and we provide resume-building opportunities and credentials that they can show to potential employers. These programs open doors that would otherwise be closed, and reduce the rate of recidivism.



In the past, Iowa's recidivism rate for Black men and women was substantially higher than the rate for White men and women, but through targeted community-based programs, the rates have been equalized.

While IPI and the Iowa DOC don't control who comes to prison or how long they stay there, targeted programs can have a large and positive impact on whether men and women of all colors come back to prison after release.

Does IPI promote "mass incarceration" to increase the program's work force and to increase profits?

Work training programs have been shown over and over again to improve reentry success. IPI partners with organizations that help us provide meaningful work training. Fewer than 10% of incarcerated men and women participate in the IPI program - there is no lack of people in prison, there is a lack of meaningful work opportunities in prison!

IPI is a 100% self-funded program within the Iowa Department of Corrections - it is not a profit making program or a separate business. Any sustainable income is used to improve the program, such as providing more modern equipment and computers. IPI does not fund the DOC, nor does IPI receive any state appropriation.

Are the participants in IPI's training program forced to work - is it "Slave Labor"?

Participation in the IPI training program is completely voluntary - in fact, men and women have to apply in order to join the IPI program. Contrary to what you might hear, prisons don't suffer from a lack of people to work - they suffer from a lack of work for people! Less than 10% of Iowa's incarcerated individuals participate in the IPI program. Others work in the laundry, the kitchen, grounds care, or don't have any work opportunities at all.

Does IPI pay "unfair wages" to participants of its training programs in order to sell cheap products?

Men and women in prison receive nontaxable allowances ranging from \$0.28 - \$0.71 per hour if they work in the kitchen, laundry, grounds care, etc. Participants in the IPI program receive the highest allowances, averaging \$1.15 per hour, and up to \$2.00 per hour. When a program operates overtime hours, participant allowances are adjusted to 1.5 times normal. The same allowance ranges are used statewide, ensuring equality without regard to race, gender, or any other factor.

As a training program and small producer that is restricted to government and nonprofit customers, IPI costs are typically not any lower than those larger companies that can sell on the open market. Participants in the IPI program pride themselves on the quality, service and value that they provide. A big part of the value that IPI provides is the improved outcomes for men and women returning to their home communities.

In addition to an hourly allowance, IPI program participants receive training such as U.S. Department of Labor registered apprenticeships, American Welding Society qualifications, OSHA 10 certification, and other credentials at no cost. The Iowa Department of Corrections currently provides apprenticeship opportunities for 27 different occupations!

For FY2020, Iowa legislators appropriated \$386 million to the Iowa DOC in order to provide housing and meals, security, programming, medical and dental care, mental health services, and parole and work release supervision to incarcerated men and women. The average daily cost to incarcerate a person in FY20 was \$94.23.

How are the participants in the IPI Training Program selected for work assignments?

Men and women must apply to join the IPI program, and must also have completed their high school diploma, completed any required treatment programs, and have a record of good behavior (avoiding things like fights and contraband). In this way, the IPI program helps men and women prepare themselves for re-entry, by completing their education and treatment, and engaging in positive behavior.

Do the participants in the program have a say on working conditions - are they allowed to speak up?

IPI associates train and receive certification in IPI's lean manufacturing program, which promotes continuous improvement, self-development, and engagement. Each individual is part of a team that has goals and works to improve Safety and other aspects of their working day. IPI program participants perform safety audits of their own work areas and use Process Problem Solving to address any problems they observe.

Iowa's DOC institutions and the IPI programs operate under OSHA jurisdiction, and the DOC employs safety officers at each location.

All incarcerated men and women have access to their institution's grievance process, which also provides for appeals. They can also contact the state's Ombudsman office with unresolved complaints.

What is the real purpose of IPI and how does it benefit all Iowans?

Iowa Code §904.801 provides the "Statement of intent" that legislators have set forth for the IPI program, with the following objectives for program participants:

Positive attitudes which will enable them to eventually function as law-abiding, self-supporting members of the community;

Good work habits that will assist them in eventually securing and holding gainful employment outside the correctional system; and

To the extent feasible, **marketable skills** that can lead directly to gainful employment upon release from a correctional institution.

Provide or assist in providing for their dependents, thus tending to strengthen the inmates' family ties while reducing the likelihood that inmates' families will have to rely upon public assistance for subsistence;

Make restitution, as the opportunity to do so becomes available, to the victims of the offenses for which the inmates were incarcerated, so as to assist the inmates in accepting responsibility for the consequences of their acts;

Make it feasible to require that such inmates **pay some portion of the cost of board and maintenance** in a correctional institution, in a manner similar to what would be necessary if they were employed in the community; and

Accumulate savings so that such inmates will have funds for necessities upon their eventual return to the community.

So does support of IPI promote racial disparity in Iowa's prisons? Or does it help to reduce racial disparity?

Ask yourself: Who is more likely to succeed upon release from prison: a person sitting in their cell with nothing to do, or a person learning a marketable job skill? Released men and women who have trained in an IPI program have lower recidivism rates; they are 8% more likely to reenter society successfully as law-abiding, tax-paying citizens and less likely to reoffend and return to prison.

The more men and women we can help by teaching valuable job skills, the more will stay out of prison. It is especially important that we prepare people of color to find work upon release, and thereby reduce the racial disparity in our prisons.

IPI strives to ensure that men and women of all races have the same opportunity to learn valuable work skills while incarcerated, and that the demographics of IPI program participants mirror that of the prison population.

What can I do to support IPI in reducing the racial disparity in Iowa's prisons?

The support of our customers is vital to IPI's mission - the program cannot help incarcerated men and women without the support of organizations statewide that purchase our products. IPI does not receive any state appropriations and relies on the sale of its products in order to train men and women, and help them succeed after release from prison.

There are many opportunities available to Iowa citizens that wish to reduce racial disparity in the justice system, including:

- Volunteer with IPI to share your knowledge and experience with incarcerated men and women;
- Encourage organizations to purchase products from the IPI program;
- Encourage your employer to open its doors to ex-felons, especially men and women of color;
- Volunteer with nonprofit organizations that provide local reentry services;
- Invite others to learn how IPI works to help men and women make a successful reentry to their communities;

IPI empowers incarcerated men and women to discover and develop their talents, and as citizens, each of us can find our own ways to assist them in their return to Iowa communities!