

Safer Foundation

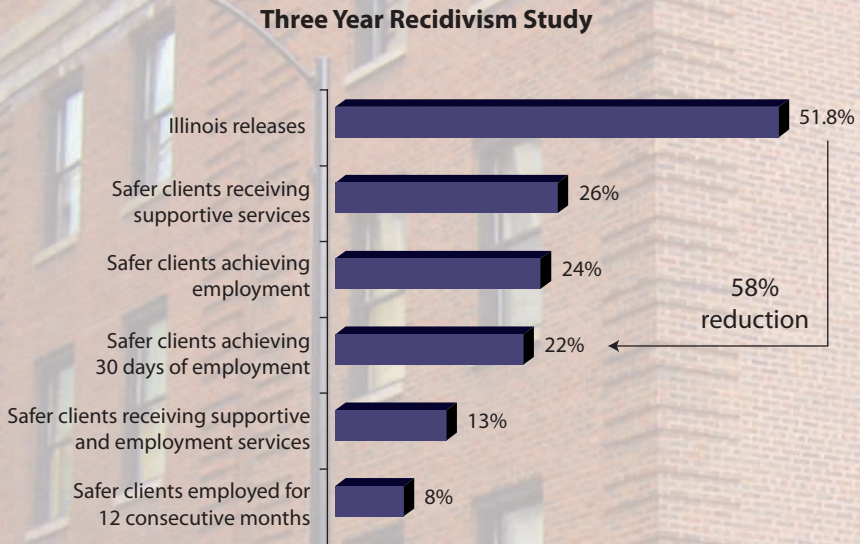


2010 Program Update
(Fiscal Year 2009)



Safer Foundation has helped lower Illinois' recidivism rate for over three decades. When our clients achieve employment for at least 30 days, they are 58 percent less likely to return to prison.

This study is done every three years and is conducted independently by Loyola University in Chicago.



“Chicago’s **Safer Foundation** has been working for three decades to smooth the reentry into society of those released from prison. It is, in a very real sense, a **crime-fighting organization.**”

– Eric Zorn
Chicago Tribune



B. Diane Williams

A letter from our President

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B. Diane Williams

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Adding contributing family members and positive role models back into our communities helps strengthen neighborhoods and tackle a pillar of poverty often overlooked. With its focused approach to providing employment assistance to people with criminal records, Safer Foundation has a long history of helping reduce recidivism in Illinois. When they achieve gainful employment, our clients have a recidivism rate of just 13 percent, a considerable drop from the statewide average of 52 percent.

By keeping people from returning to prison, Safer Foundation provides considerable relief to the state's economy, saving taxpayers millions of dollars. Illinois pays over \$22,000 per year to incarcerate each inmate. When our clients find employment, they no longer become a drain on the economy and instead become valuable contributors. With over 2,700 job starts in 2009, Safer Foundation saved the state more than \$59 million.

For over three decades now, Safer Foundation has been at the forefront of prisoner reentry. We look forward to expanding our offerings to those who need us most.

Success Story: Nadeja Beasley

Nadeja Beasley had 10 long years to think about some costly choices she made when she was young. Instead of wallowing in self pity, Nadeja made a concerted effort to better herself on the inside. Upon returning home, she stopped in at Safer, eager to find a job.

Incarcerated at a young age, Nadeja navigated past many potential pitfalls in prison and worked tirelessly to make sure that when she eventually returned to society, she'd be as prepared as possible.

“When I was incarcerated, I received my GED, my Associate’s of Arts degree, my Food Service Invitation license, and I was one credit away from my Applied Sciences degree,” she said. “That was my whole focus, staying in school. You go through a lot of things while you’re in there, but despite everything that goes on while you’re inside, it’s what you’re making of yourself that matters.”

“Safer has the resources and the leads for employment opportunities.

...The door’s always open.”

– Nadeja Beasley

Despite her work in the classroom while in prison, Nadeja confronted a difficult job market upon her release. Not knowing where to begin, she came to Safer looking for the help she needed to find gainful employment.

“If there was no Safer I would struggle a little bit harder than I’m struggling now,” she said. “Safer has the resources and the leads for employment opportunities. With me trying to do it on my own, it’s been so hectic. People are hesitant to give. Once they see that conviction, the door closes. With Safer, the door’s always open.”

As she navigates the difficult transition back into society, Nadeja relies on her family for encouragement. Her determination and work ethic have garnered her plenty of support.

“My family is proud of me because I won’t give up,” she said. “Some people get down, but it’s life. It’s easy when things are going well, but when things are going hard, it’s the hardest thing. You have to try to keep that hope and not give up. Just keep on.”



Nadeja Beasley

Statewide Programs

For nearly 40 years, Safer Foundation has served as an educational and employment services institution with a focused goal of helping people with criminal records become job-ready upon returning to society. After completing the curriculum and taking advantage of any supportive services necessary, Safer clients receive intensive case management and placement assistance as they search for gainful employment.

Post-Release Programs

Employment and Educational Services

Orientation and Intake: When clients first enter Safer's program, they go through a six-hour orientation and intake session. In a group session, clients are reminded that while Safer is there to help them in any way it can, the clients themselves are responsible for putting in the time and effort necessary to get their lives back on track. The relationship manifests itself as a partnership instead of a handout. Also during the orientation, clients complete a pair of assessments (one on the computer, the other on paper) that help identify barriers to employment (financial, emotional, physical, training, education, etc.) and potential skills or interests that could direct the job searching process.

Supportive Services: During the initial orientation and intake, Safer screens all clients for potential barriers to employment. These barriers could include court mandated substance abuse counseling, anger management, or other mental health assessments. Clients that arrive at Safer with these mandates are directed to our Supportive Services Department, where they address the required assessments before going on to our Retention Specialists to continue the job-readiness process.



Retention Services: Clients who don't have mandates meet with an employment case manager, known as a Retention Specialist. These meetings help clients confront the task of obtaining and maintaining employment upon reentry. The Retention Specialist uses the assessments completed during orientation to determine a course of action best suited to the client's particular skills and interests. The majority of clients attend a job-readiness training program, which consists of instructions on how to fill out applications, develop a resume, and prepare for an interview. Once a client has completed the week-long job-readiness training, he or she can participate in a retention group. A Retention Specialist

Safer Foundation co-founders Raymond Curran and Gus Wilhelmy attend the Spirit of Safer Luncheon along with Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and WGN News Anchor and Safer Board Member Robert Jordan



oversees these group sessions as clients hunt for job leads and vent their frustrations and fears about the process.

Market Cultivation: While the client works with the Retention Specialist on job readiness,

Safer's Sector Managers are busy cultivating the job market. Sector Managers are the backbone of Pivotal Staffing, LLC, Safer's professional staffing company created to help place its clients in the workforce. Trained in sales, marketing, and recruitment, Sector Managers discuss hiring Safer clients with employers in fields such as transportation, warehousing, hospitality, construction, landscaping, and manufacturing.

When a client successfully finds a job, the Retention Specialist follows up once a week for the first 30 days, gauges the status of the transition and offers support, if needed.

Youth Empowerment Program

Located in Chicago's West Loop, Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa, YEP offers an eight-week GED program for youth (ages 16–21) who have criminal records and have not completed high school. Adolescents who have been involved in the criminal justice system are particularly vulnerable to the temptation of the criminal lifestyle and are among those most likely to return to prison or jail. The goal of YEP is to assist these youth in achieving their full potential by helping them develop the habits, values, and skills needed to obtain a GED and move forward to continue their education and/or secure employment.

Faith- and Community-Based Initiative

Focusing on the neighborhoods most affected by reentry in the Chicagoland area — including Englewood, East Garfield Park, Auburn Gresham, Austin, Harvey, and Maywood — Safer Foundation's Faith- and Community-Based Initiative allows clients access to services within their neighborhoods. The services provided within these communities have three primary aspects: mentoring, reentry counseling, and employment assistance.

Housing Initiative

Safer's Housing Initiative utilizes funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide rental and utility assistance to recently released homeless individuals with criminal records, substance abuse issues, and/or chronic illness or other disabilities. The program operates under a permanent housing model, leasing one-bedroom apartments to clients.

Safer Return

As a five-year demonstration program, Safer Return is the product of Safer's partnership with the Urban Institute to develop a reentry pilot project focused on Chicago's East Garfield Park neighborhood. Made possible by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Safer Return helps clients by addressing key individual needs, introducing system reforms, and improving local conditions while involving the entire community. Safer Return targets those returning to Garfield Park prior to release and prepares them for reentry through a community-based initiative.

Pre-Release Programs

Sheridan and Southwest Illinois Correctional Center

The Sheridan/SWICC Job Preparedness Program aims to provide treatment, reentry services, and employment assistance to incarcerated men with substance abuse addictions. Working with clients prior to their release, Safer's Sheridan/SWICC Program offers classroom sessions focusing on career exploration, job-seeking skills, resume building advice, interviewing tactics, and tips on maintaining employment. Clients have access to a wide selection of training programs and courses that build the skills needed to find gainful employment once they return to society. Upon release, there are several Safer offices around the State of Illinois that serve Sheridan and SWICC clients with employment services and job placement. These offices are located in Aurora, Chicago, Decatur, Joliet, Peoria, and Rockford.

Statewide Partnership to Increase Safety through Employment (SPISE)

Located inside 38 of Illinois' 39 prisons, SPISE is a mandatory job preparedness program with two main emphases: in-prison instruction and post-release job development and placement. The two are interrelated and require a coordinated delivery approach. The program covers a total of 90 hours, with 60 devoted to training and instruction. These mandatory hours are broken down into 30 hours of job preparedness instruction, 24 hours of computer lab training, and six hours of mock interviews. The additional 30 hours of computer lab tutorials provide clients with the opportunity to enhance their overall knowledge and comfort with using a computer.

Adult Transition Centers

Safer Foundation is the only private agency that administers two secured residential transition centers on behalf of the Illinois Department of Corrections. The purpose of these centers is to give selected individuals the opportunity to transition to the community and employment prior to release in order to improve the likelihood that they will become employed, law-abiding members of the community. Throughout their stay, residents are encouraged to work with their families. Located in Chicago's North Lawndale community, the ATCs also provide clients with a wide range of reentry services, including case management, job-readiness training, GED preparation, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, life skills training, parenting skills assistance, and other off-site educational programs.

PACE Institute

Located in the Cook County Jail, Safer's PACE Institute provides adult literacy and GED preparation to detainees who want to improve upon their education level or obtain a GED. The PACE curriculum focuses primarily on three learning domains: mathematics, writing, and reading. When clients complete their objectives, additional training exercises take what they have learned and help them apply that knowledge to practical, everyday scenarios. By using their time on the inside to better their educational standing, PACE graduates put themselves in a more competitive position when they reenter the community and attempt to find employment.

Public Policy

Safer Foundation helps people get jobs by serving as an advocate to employers and legislators. Through these efforts, Safer strives to remove any legislative barriers that could prevent people with criminal records from finding and maintaining employment.

Safer was recently instrumental in the passage of Illinois Senate Bill 1050, which expanded the eligibility pool for obtaining Certificates of Relief from Disability (for occupational licensing) and Certificates of Good Conduct (for general employment and reputation).

Council of Advisors to Reduce Recidivism through Employment (CARRE)

With a membership representing over 100 individuals, groups, organizations, agencies, coalitions, and institutions, CARRE has effectively produced and disseminated policy papers and conducted campaigns to increase public awareness of legislative developments regarding reentry issues.

“I commend the Safer Foundation for conducting its efforts to help people with criminal records get their life back on track.”

– Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Safer Foundation clients receive vocational training

Photo courtesy of City of Chicago Department of Environment, Greencorps Chicago.



Success Story: Kevin Russell

Kevin Russell knew he had betrayed his family and he swore he'd never do it again. Five years ago, Kevin entered prison, leaving behind a young son. Ever since, Kevin has been determined to do right by his boy and that goal led him to Safer Foundation.

Prior to his arrest, Kevin wanted to be an electrician. He took all the courses he needed to get his electrical certification, but ran afoul of the law.

“When I first got incarcerated, I received a letter from a family member,” he said. “They sent me the letter that the electrical union had sent me to let me know they were going to hire me. I was supposed to come in on June 6, but I was incarcerated on May 30.”

Realizing his mistakes had cost him a great job opportunity, Kevin thought about the broader effects of his decisions.

“It was a heartbreaker right there for me because I have a son and I have a daughter,” he said. “At the time, I was in my son’s life very much so. He was basically my best friend. I had to realize that after I saw that letter and took the time to think, I couldn’t honestly say I love him as much as I say I do if I’m doing things out there that aren’t conducive to me and him growing together.”

Kevin looked for the best way to be a positive role model for his son. Knowing that a real job would be the best example, Kevin turned to Safer Foundation, the same organization that helped him find himself while on the inside.

“One of the biggest and most important aspects of Safer that they provided to me was the benefit of the doubt,” he said. “They didn’t judge me because I’m an inmate or I’m a convict or whatever it is. ... They also helped me while I was incarcerated. With me going to Sheridan (Correctional Center), they have the computer lab there. They helped me realize who I am and what I am as a person. Once I had all those things behind me,

Kevin Russell



I started working with Safer, tutoring other inmates trying to get their GEDs, trying to get a better education.”

Upon his release, Kevin returned to Safer, and after other employment opportunities found a job as an ironworker. While he is grateful for everything Safer has done for him, he wants others in his situation to know that the program is not a handout.

“I’m a man, I’m your father,
I’m your friend.”

– *Kevin Russell*

“A lot of times we, as people, we feel that somebody is obligated to give us something or we’re deserving of something without putting forth any effort,” he said. “It’s sort of like, my hand’s wide open, make sure it’s filled up. I have to let people know, Safer’s only going to do just as much for you as you’re going to do for yourself. And when you start doing for yourself, believe me, they’re going to do more for you than you even think you’re doing for yourself.”

For Kevin, Safer helped him reconnect with his son. When the child asked if he was done with crime, Kevin had a simple answer.

“I had to explain to him that I’m three things: I’m a man, I’m your father, and I’m your friend,” he said. “Those are the only three things that I’m going to be. He missed a lot out of my life and I missed a lot out of his life. I know I did, but he has a heart of gold for me and I understand that. That’s the thing that I have to realize. I cannot continue to put myself in position to hurt him because he’s going to love me unconditionally regardless. I’m disrespecting him by not being the man that I need to be for him. It’s a beautiful thing right now for me to be in the position I’m in.”

Stimulus Funds Help Clients Get to Work

The federal economic stimulus package, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), has spurred job creation by funding “shovel ready” projects across the country.

Safer Foundation has recognized this opportunity and has become an avid participant in this endeavor. Through ARRA stimulus funds, Safer has initiated several new programs that have provided hundreds of new jobs for our clients.

The Neighborhood Clean-Up Program, through the City of Chicago Department of Family and Supportive Services, allows 33 clients the opportunity to join work crews and participate in community beautification projects like snow removal and alley upkeep in City neighborhoods.

Thanks to an award from the City of Chicago Department of Environment, Safer, through its **Safer Return** demonstration project, has also teamed up with Garfield Park Conservatory to provide green jobs training in sustainable landscaping for 50 people with criminal records in Chicago’s East Garfield Park community. Examples of this work include urban agricultural projects in some of the neighborhood’s vacant lots.



*Safer Foundation client receives guidance during the Green Jobs Training & Experience Program.
Photo courtesy of City of Chicago Department of Environment, Greencorps Chicago.*

Green Jobs Training and Experience Program, which will provide additional green jobs training opportunities for Safer clients.

In total, these landmark programs will create 293 jobs for Safer clients. If each of these participants stay out of prison for at least one year, it will save the State of Illinois over \$6 million in prison-related costs and allow returning parents to serve as breadwinners for their families. Safer looks forward to participating in more programs like these and hopes to continue to be a part of the economic recovery process.

The Deconstruction Work Services Training Program, made possible thanks to the Chicago Department of Community Development, provides 70 clients with training related to the controlled deconstruction of buildings and the salvaging of materials. By diverting these materials from the landfill, this program will help decrease the amount of waste resulting from typical building demolition.

Safer has also partnered with WRD/Greencorps Chicago for the Department of Environment’s

Safer Employer Receives Business Leadership Award

For Christopher Cox, it's always just been about finding the right employees for the job. As Director of Operations at Metro Kleeners in Evanston, Cox helped create an employment environment that has allowed people with criminal records the chance to reenter society with an opportunity to build their resumes. For his efforts, Cox received the Illinois Business Leadership Award at the annual Illinois Workforce Development Conference sponsored by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity in Springfield.

"I'm pretty surprised," Cox said. "I wasn't expecting it, but it's nice to be recognized."

Cox and Metro Kleeners received the award for their open-minded approach to hiring.

"We have a policy that we care more about the choices people make from this point forward," he said. "It's important for employers to look beyond actions from the past and see the potential in their employees."

Founded in 2002, Metro Kleeners is a local dry-cleaning company that has two locations in Northern Cook County and a third location opening soon. They also have contracts with 11 hotels in the Chicagoland area. Of Metro Kleeners' staff of 42 people, approximately 75 percent have some sort of past criminal record.

Cox is also a member of Safer Foundation's Employer Advisory Board and speaks highly of the work Safer does throughout Illinois and Eastern Iowa.

"Safer provides a group of candidates that are readily available and eager to work," he said. "Though there might be a general apprehension [when hiring people with criminal records], Safer is the best thing out there for helping people who are willing to work to have the chance to go out and work everyday."

58%

Reduction in recidivism.

300+

Clients obtain their GEDs each year.

2,700+

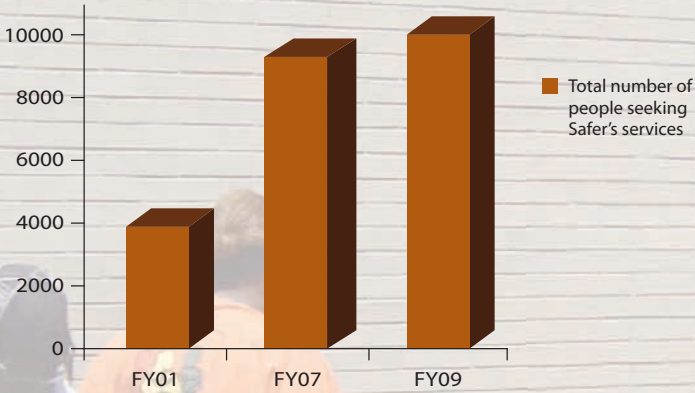
Safer Foundation client job starts per year.

400+

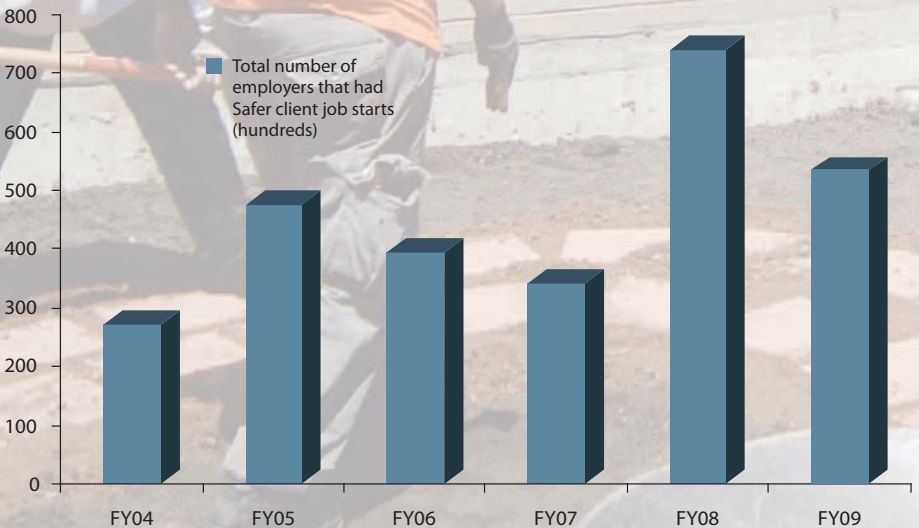
Employers hired Safer Foundation clients.

Statistics Show Safer's Success

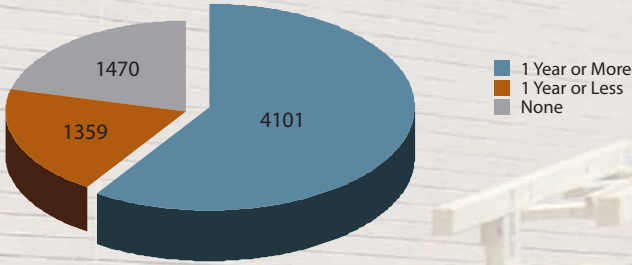
As Safer Foundation continues to be a leader in prisoner reentry services, more and more persons with criminal records are coming through our doors. Over the past eight years, the number of people seeking Safer's services has increased by 255 percent.



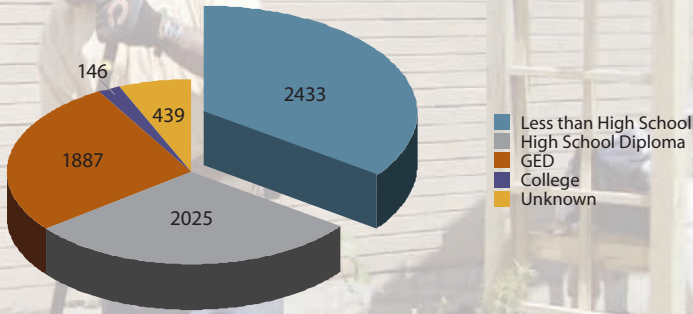
Safer has cultivated a number of relationships with employers and has successfully connected hundreds with eager clients ready for work.



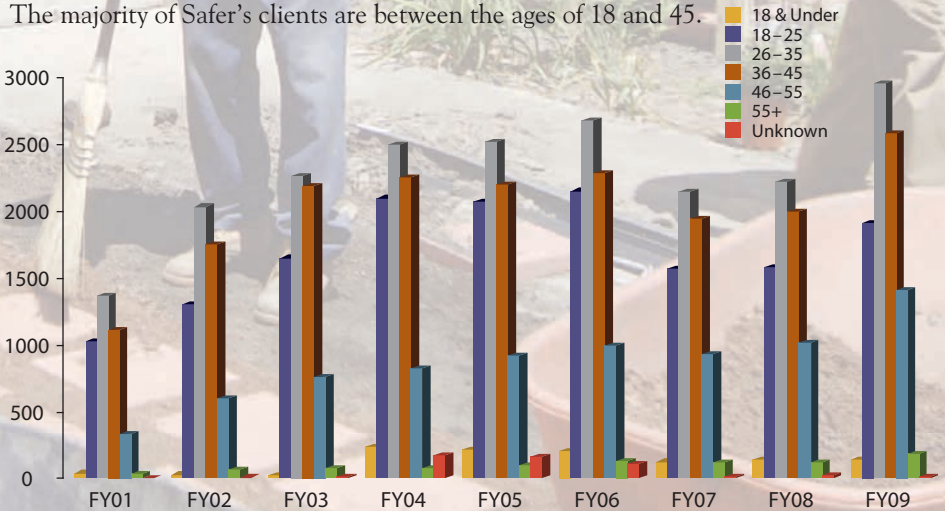
Most Safer clients have more than a year of work experience. For those who have less, Safer offers comprehensive job readiness support and transitional employment opportunities to help build a career.



A majority of clients have completed high school or achieved their GED, however, those who have not receive the support of Safer’s educational services. Over 300 Safer clients pass the GED exam each year.



The majority of Safer’s clients are between the ages of 18 and 45.





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