

## FORMER OFFENDERS IN ARIZONA TO FIND WORK



Former offenders living in the Arizona area will now have more assistance when it comes to finding the necessary employment that they have actively been seeking since being released from prison. The United States Department of Labor has provided a grant to a non-profit organization in the city of Phoenix, a grant that is worth approximately \$1.2 million dollars, which will be used to help individuals who were once incarcerated so that they can find employment and start gaining some stability. The organization, known as the Arizona Women's Education & Employment Incorporation or the AWEE, is planning to use the money as a way of helping former offenders with the training that they need, along with mentoring and preventative measures to help them gain the skills and training that is needed to obtain long-term employment. The AWEE was first established back in 1981 and there are currently 34 employees working for the organization, which is funded by grants that come from the state and also from federal grants as well. Some people choose to privately donate to the organization, which is also a huge help as funding is necessary to provide these individuals with the help an assistance that they truly need. The United States Department of Justice released shocking information, showing that the number of incarcerated women living in the state of Arizona had actually increased by about 7.5 percent within the span of eight years, nearly a decade. During the same time, there was an increase in the number of incarcerated men in Arizona as well. A separate study, taken within the span of three years, showed that a whopping total of 39 percent of the offenders who are finally released in the state of Arizona will typically end up back in jail. It is believed there are several reasons these individuals find themselves back in jail, including the fact that it is not always easy to find employment, especially when you have marks on your past. Those who are unable to find employment and are not getting the help they need will typically return back to a life of a crime and as a result, they end up back in jail as well. The purpose of the program is to break the chain and help these individuals so that they can start over fresh. In fact, the AWEE helped Vicki Rainey, who is 50 years old and from Phoenix. Rainey spent several decades back and forth, in and out of prison, because of drug charges. She was addicted to drugs and says she used them as an escape. The program helped her to get back on her feet and also assisted her with getting a job that would allow her to live without needing to return back to a life of crime.

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