

# Casey in Baltimore

CREATING SUCCESSFUL FUTURES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION has been working to promote the well-being of vulnerable children for more than 50 years. *Casey in Baltimore* is one in a series of publications designed to illustrate the ways we are working with specific cities to help fashion creative, cost-effective strategies to strengthen families and communities and build better futures for children whose circumstances place them at risk.



## CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BETTER-PAYING JOBS AND FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR FAMILIES

After graduating from high school, Joy Levi worked in a series of jobs. But she never earned more than the \$5.15 per hour minimum wage or received any benefits, and she struggled to support herself and her young daughter.

In 2004, Levi (pictured above) enrolled in a lab associate's training program at the BioTechnical Institute of Maryland. The three-month program, which has received Casey support, transformed her life. Levi, 26, now works as a lab associate in a Johns Hopkins *continued on page 2*

LETTER FROM DOUGLAS W. NELSON  
PRESIDENT, THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

*Baltimore is a wonderful place for the Casey Foundation to call home, with many energetic, creative people working hard to improve the lives of children and families.*

*During our years in Baltimore, we've teamed up with many outstanding partners—foundations, community groups, government agencies, and hard-working residents and program providers—who are all determined to make a difference for kids, families, and neighborhoods. Casey invests in services for children and families through its Casey Family Services unit, the Foundation's direct services operation, and through its flagship Baltimore Direct Services Grants Program. We've supported reforms in key child- and family-serving systems, most recently through the Maryland Opportunity Compacts, which target more state dollars to local prevention programs. We're also investing in critical school improvement strategies, after-school programs, and neighborhood development efforts. A centerpiece of all Casey's local work is the East Baltimore Development Initiative, an ambitious multipartner project to rebuild a section of the city near Johns Hopkins Hospital. This community development effort aims not only to change the physical conditions in a neighborhood, but, more importantly, to improve the lives and futures of some of Baltimore's most vulnerable children and families.*

*This report highlights one critical segment of Casey's efforts to create opportunities for low-income families—helping families achieve economic success. In Baltimore, we have worked closely with employers and providers to create the right kinds of instruction, focusing on job skills and job readiness. However, it's not enough to have a job. We also are working with families to make sure they have access to financial education and other important services, from housing assistance to child care subsidies. We work toward helping families build the savings and assets that can ensure a better, more stable future.*

*We don't do this alone. We borrow promising models and proven strategies from farsighted states, legislators, and governors; we build on and partner with entrepreneurial nonprofit providers, local foundations, grassroots community organizations, and frontline workers; and we seek guidance from the families and young people we are all trying to help.*

*Together, we're all making a difference. Casey is proud to support these important efforts to increase economic opportunities that can help strengthen the remarkable families and communities in our remarkable hometown. ♡*

*continued from cover*

cancer research lab, preserving cells and serum. She earns over twice the minimum wage and receives full benefits, including health insurance.

"Having that stability is a load off my mind. I really wanted a career, not just a job," says Levi, who hopes to attend college to study molecular biology. "This job has really helped my self-confidence. I enjoy what I do, and there's always room for growth."

Helping Levi and others move into good jobs and financial self-sufficiency is a focus of Casey's work in Baltimore.

The city has many economic challenges but it also has significant workforce opportunities. Taking advantage of these opportunities, the workforce initiatives of Casey and its partners focus on health care, construction, and biotechnology—three of Baltimore's largest growth sectors. The Foundation has worked closely with training providers, employers, and other key players to make sure the training fits the jobs available. A new pre-apprentice construction training program, for example, is being coordinated by the Job Opportunities Task Force, a local workforce organization, and the instruction was developed by the leading association of Baltimore construction firms.

"[Construction] companies have not always been great about developing the workforce," says Mike Henderson, president of Associated Builders and Contractors' Baltimore chapter. "Here, we're providing them with skill training, safety training. We're doing all we can to help them succeed."

Because Baltimore's biotech sector is also thriving, Casey and East Baltimore Development, Inc., support the BioStart program, which will prepare about 20 low-skill workers to move into formal biotech training and eventually jobs. The BioTechnical Institute of Maryland, which offers BioStart, works with 28 biotech industry partners to place program graduates in jobs and has an 80 percent job retention rate after one year. In health care, Casey has teamed with others on workforce initiatives ranging from providing career coaches who craft career paths for low-wage hospital workers to a program preparing participants for entry-level health care jobs.

Vonderlita Bell-Benton, an employee at the University of Maryland (UM) Medical Center in Baltimore, benefited from the health care sector initiative. For nearly 15 years, she

**FOR YEARS**, Casey has worked in Baltimore with the public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors to improve results for children and families. Through its Baltimore Direct Services Grants Program and the Baltimore Division of Casey Family Services, Casey invests in a wide range of services for children and families. It supports reforms in child- and family-serving systems, such as the Maryland Opportunity Compacts. It invests in critical school improvement strategies. And Casey's neighborhood development efforts include working with the East Baltimore Development Initiative, an ambitious multipartner project to rebuild an area near Johns Hopkins Hospital. Throughout its Baltimore work, Casey strives to provide many supports to families, including workforce development efforts that help people move into good jobs so they can provide stability for their families.

worked in nursing homes, never earning more than \$9 per hour and going without health insurance. But in the fall of 2005, Bell-Benton, the mother of two daughters, was accepted by a UM Medical Center program that trains patient-care technicians—a critical job hospitals struggle to fill.

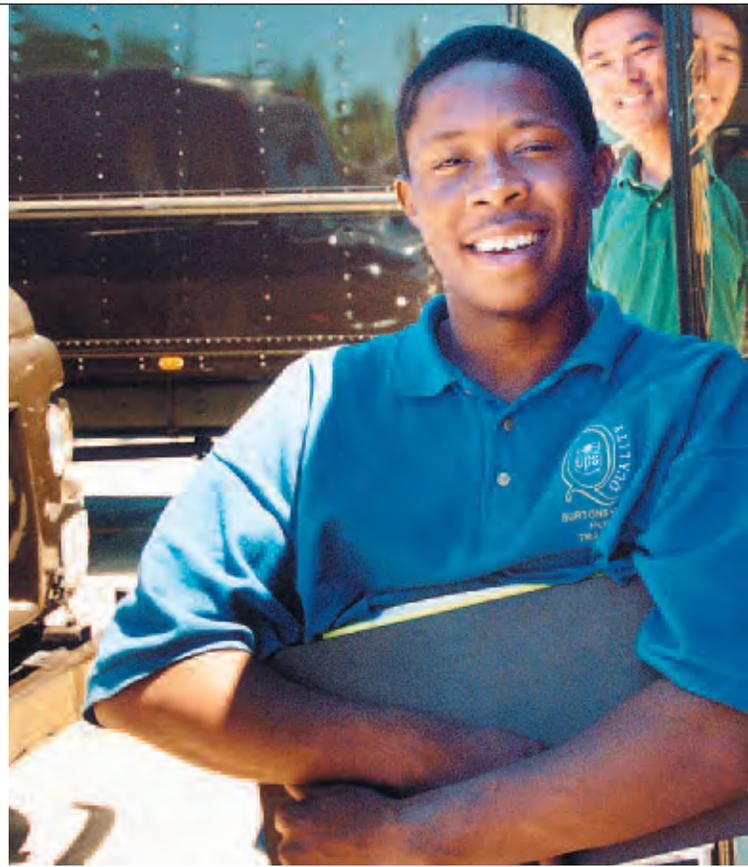
Bell-Benton's career coach, Saana Wright, later guided her to accept a job on a UM Medical Center surgical floor. Today, Bell-Benton earns \$11.80 an hour and receives health insurance. Wright still works with Bell-Benton, making sure she meets her managers' expectations and urging her to get the additional training needed for a better-paying job. "She constantly comes and checks up on us," says Bell-Benton.

Today, Bell-Benton believes she has a real future in the workplace, with the chance to advance. "I'm growing each and every day. I'm so ecstatic," she says. "Saana and her department have been so encouraging."



Several of these workforce initiatives were created with knowledge gained in other cities. Partnerships with other funding entities and key employers suggest the future is strong for such targeted efforts. ♡

**Brandon Holland uses a measuring tape during a pre-apprentice construction training class that is part of a workforce initiative supported by Casey and its partners.**



#### BALTIMORE'S WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

- THIRTY-ONE PERCENT OF ADULTS HAVE NO HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR GED.
- BALTIMORE HAS THE SIXTH LOWEST WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION RATE OF LARGE CITIES IN THE NATION.
- MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IS \$30,078— 57 PERCENT OF THE MARYLAND AVERAGE.

## BUILDING ON CASEY INITIA

Casey's extensive family strengthening experience around the country has informed its Baltimore work.

For example, Baltimore's workforce initiatives build on lessons learned through the Jobs Initiative, a long-term Casey workforce development initiative in five cities. The Jobs Initiative demonstrated that successful workforce efforts must be developed with employers' direct involvement.

"You have employers significantly at the table," says Bob Giloth, who leads Casey's family economic success work. "These aren't just programs. Employers with real labor force needs are coming together to fix these shortages."

In Baltimore, key employers involved include hospitals, hotels, construction firms, and biotechnology laboratories. As with all projects, Casey monitors results, focusing on the feasibility of sustaining them over the long term.



## TIVES AND EXPERTISE

The new efforts in Baltimore also dovetail with Casey initiatives such as the School to Career Partnership, which helps young people aging out of foster care learn and gain work experience, while receiving support services and tuition reimbursement, through placements at UPS and other companies.

Casey Family Services, the Foundation's direct services operation, also has helped families in the area since 1995 through its Baltimore Division by providing a range of services, including family advocacy and support for young families, GED and English as a second language classes, computer training, child care, and after-school activities. ♡

**Left, Joy Levi enjoys her new career as a lab associate, a well-paying job with full benefits that she got after attending a training program Casey helped support. Above, Ali Brown, a former School to Career Partnership participant who started at UPS and who has gone on to successful employment elsewhere, and his case manager at the time, Michael Lee.**

## REBUILDING NEIGHBORHOODS, REENERGIING FAMILIES

The East Baltimore Development Initiative (EBDI) is working to rebuild distressed neighborhoods and give families new opportunities.

The project seeks to transform 80 acres near Johns Hopkins Hospital into a research park, plus provide housing and family supports. The \$800 million initiative plans to create 1,200 new or renovated homes for buyers and renters of various income levels, plus 6,000 new jobs.

The project is supported by a coalition of public and private partners, including Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions—the area's major employer, the city of Baltimore, foundations, nonprofits, and state and federal government agencies. Casey has made a significant commitment to improve workforce and family support services, allowing EBDI to provide critical workforce development assistance. During Workforce Wednesdays at EBDI's offices, residents participate in job preparation workshops or find job training referrals. The Chase Academy, funded by J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., provides financial counseling and home buying advice.

"While buildings are important, it's even more important to focus on people," says Jack Shannon, EBDI's president and chief executive. "It's been especially valuable to EBDI to have a partner such as Casey. They have provided resources at important junctures and access to other funders and practitioners across the country involved in similar things." ♡



## CRAFTING A COALITION TO EXPAND THE HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

The notion of creating a Baltimore coalition to improve workforce development in health care blossomed during a conversation between people riding home on a train after attending a 2002 forum co-sponsored by the Casey Foundation. Taking part were representatives from a Baltimore foundation, the local workforce investment board, the empowerment zone, and a major hospital.

From this discussion came an effort by key institutions to develop a pipeline for qualified workers to fill critical shortages at Baltimore-area hospitals, which are major employers. Casey committed significant financial support, as did the Abell Foundation, Open Society Institute—Baltimore, the Aaron Straus and Lillie

Straus Foundation, the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, and the Alvin and Fanny Blaustein Thalheimer Foundation. Several of the area's largest hospitals joined the effort, working as a group to address staffing shortages.

By 2003, a coalition including employers, foundations, federal and state agencies, educational institutions, and other nonprofit groups was established. After gathering data about workforce issues in Baltimore's health care system, the coalition identified seven key positions that require more than 300 additional workers annually. It also looked at the educational and training programs available.

The coalition led to the creation of the Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Health-care. Career coaches funded through the

Above from left, Rashik Abdullahi, Valerie Marshall, and Deborah Kane work on an assignment at the BioTechnical Institute of Maryland. Another student, Ahmad Jones, inspects a petri dish for contamination.

coalition work in area hospitals, and a new health care training program, focused on basic academic skills, will begin in 2006 for 105 participants.

Nine hospitals, two community colleges, six foundations, and three public service agencies are part of the 70-member coalition, and more than \$1 million has been committed to the effort.

"You have people coming forward and saying 'We'll be the glue that holds this together.' They're the visionaries," says Pamela Paulk, vice president for human resources at Johns Hopkins Hospital. "We would not have been able to take an idea to this point in just over two years if it hadn't been for the funders' commitment." ❧

## COACHING WORKERS TOWARD SUCCESS

As a career coach at the University of Maryland Medical Center, Saana Wright helps the busy downtown Baltimore hospital find and develop qualified workers for often hard-to-fill positions—from patient care to radiology. Wright also works to make sure workers meet on-the-job expectations.

“For a lot of people, this is their first time in a professional setting with expectations and accountability,” Wright says. “I can help the employee deal with any speed bumps.”

Wright, 30, has an MBA and formerly worked in human resources. Casey and other Baltimore foundations committed \$105,000 in both 2004 and 2005 to

hire career coaches such as Wright, a sum matched by the University of Maryland and four other area hospitals—Mercy Medical Center, St. Agnes HealthCare, Union Memorial Hospital/Medstar Health, and Sinai Hospital/LifeBridge Health. Many health care employees need assistance and encouragement in order to advance in the workplace.

Career coaches help break down self-imposed barriers. “It’s not just a lack of education,” says Sheila Green, a Johns Hopkins Hospital career coach who was funded by a U.S. Department of Labor grant. “Sometimes it’s very low self-esteem.”

Eleven career coaches from six hospitals have worked with 773 hospital employees, guiding many onto career paths leading to better-paying jobs. The Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare brings together career coaches monthly to assess their usefulness. Training tools, career maps, and job descriptions also have been developed to ensure that coaches focus on meeting hospitals’ critical workforce needs. ♡

**Vonderlita Bell-Benton, left, a patient-care technician at the University of Maryland Medical Center, walks on a surgical floor with Saana Wright, a hospital career coach who has counseled Bell-Benton.**



**A new** construction training program teaches skills that can lead to well-paying jobs. One participant



says, “These kinds of jobs are not just about digging a ditch. It’s building something you can take pride in.”

## CONSTRUCTING A STURDY CAREER IN BUILDING

Rodney Chase, 47, has served fast food, bartended, driven trucks, and done unskilled day labor. But today he is aiming for a better-paying career with better benefits.

Chase is enrolled in a new pre-apprentice construction training program in East Baltimore designed to take advantage of workforce needs in a booming sector. It prepares graduates for apprenticeship programs that typically lead to well-paying jobs.

“It’s a golden opportunity,” Chase says. “These kinds of jobs are not just about digging a ditch. It’s building something you can take pride in.”

While the construction sector has long-established apprenticeship training, Baltimore has none. And research supported by Casey shows that low-skill Baltimore residents have trouble getting accepted into training outside the city.

The new training is designed to instill in students the right skills and mindset about the work world.

“We remind them over and over: Be there on the job every day and on time,” says Jack Diehl, lead instructor in the program for the Associated Builders and Contractors. “Those are things they really need, as well as how to use a hammer or saw.”

Organizers plan to offer five 13-week sessions for 20 students each in 2006. Participants receive a small stipend for transportation costs. Goodwill Industries and the East Baltimore Community Corporation are providing additional counseling.

People who complete the program will receive work boots, construction tools, a construction job, and a spot in a trade apprenticeship program—the basics for moving ahead. ♪

From left, Jack Diehl works with students Marquetta Brown and Rodney Chase in the pre-apprentice construction training program.

### PRE-APPRENTICE CONSTRUCTION TRAINING

- ONE-HUNDRED MEN AND WOMEN TO BE TRAINED IN 2006.
- BALTIMORE’S ASSOCIATED BUILDERS AND CONTRACTORS HAS COMMITTED TO PLACING AS MANY AS 100 GRADUATES INTO JOBS OR APPRENTICE PROGRAMS.
- JOB OPENINGS WILL LIKELY HAVE WAGES THAT START AT ABOUT \$10 PER HOUR.

## SUPPORTING CENTERS THAT HELP WORKING FAMILIES GET AHEAD

Costs at Christmas can overwhelm low-income families' budgets. But financial counselors at the Bon Secours Foundation in West Baltimore ease this stress by helping families save throughout the year for Christmas spending. Families that save \$25 per month for a year receive a \$50 bonus from Bon Secours.

"Christmas has become all about spending," says Kevin Jordan, associate director of Bon Secours' economic and community development efforts. "We're attempting to get people to plan ahead."

Bon Secours is one of four Centers for Working Families in the Baltimore area that Casey sponsors. Taking a new approach, they each offer key economic services at one location. They help clients find training or education to secure a job, get available benefits, manage a family budget, and plan for the future.

During its first two years, Bon Secours helped place 66 clients in jobs. It also helped many more open bank accounts and secure their financial situations, for example, by starting a retirement fund. Getting a job is only a start, says Jordan,

adding, "We're an economic self-sufficiency program."

Until she visited Bon Secours, Asha Khalid, a 32-year-old mother of two, couldn't secure a permanent nursing assistant job with health benefits. But after learning how to improve her résumé and interview skills, she quickly found a good job with benefits at a Baltimore hospital.

At the center, Khalid also received financial counseling that helped her pay off costly debts. "Now I've gotten my credit cleaned up and I'm saving money," she says. "I'm so proud."

The Centers for Working Families also provide free or affordable tax preparation services in conjunction with the Baltimore CASH Campaign. Supported by Casey and other foundations, the campaign helps low-income working families receive the full benefits of the Earned Income Tax Credit, generating thousands of dollars in refunds and also avoiding large fees charged by for-profit tax preparers.

Counselors encourage families to use their tax refunds to improve their long-term security. ♡

From left, Brenda Smith and her son Gerard Cole talk with Althea Saunders-Ranniar of West Baltimore's Bon Secours Foundation. Bon Secours is part of Casey's Centers for Working Families initiative, which provides free tax preparation help and other services.



## READYING BALTIMOREANS FOR THE WORKFORCE

*m*any areas of Baltimore, particularly along its waterfront, are thriving. But parts of the city are still deeply distressed, and too many residents have not had adequate opportunities and preparation to enter or advance in the workforce.

To address this issue, Casey and its partners are supporting a new pilot workforce project to prepare over 45 Baltimoreans for entry-level jobs in health care and hospitality in 2006.

“There is a major need for this,” says Ann Bostic, director of the Workforce Center at Sojourner-Douglass College, which is providing training. “There are a lot of individuals in East Baltimore and throughout the city who are unemployed or underemployed and need skills.”

Casey funded a curriculum emphasizing job readiness skills, including reading and writing instruction. Participants also learn how to function well in the workplace by dressing professionally and developing good workplace skills. Created by employers and a professional employment trainer, the curriculum is designed to “guarantee” that graduates have the skills and qualifications for entry-level jobs.

Instruction also includes financial education, focusing on how to open a checking account or save for a home or car. Participants work with a career coach on plans for developing economic security.

Johns Hopkins Hospital representatives have been closely involved, screening health care training applicants. The hospital



is guaranteeing entry-level jobs to successful graduates of the four-week program who also complete a one-week internship. Similarly, the Marriott Hotel near the Inner Harbor is expected to hire graduates of the hospitality program for jobs paying up to \$12 an hour, with benefits. ♡



## EASING REENTRY FOR FORMER PRISONERS

Over 8,000 men and women leave incarceration annually and return to live in Baltimore, where they typically encounter obstacles to leading a productive life. They often have little legitimate work experience and lack necessary skills and education. Many need substance-abuse treatment and job training, and employers are often reluctant to take a chance on applicants with a criminal record.

Casey has been part of a major new effort to address this pressing social issue in Baltimore. Mayor Martin O'Malley established an Ex-Offender Employment Steering Committee in 2004, and public and private funders have joined to improve employment outcomes for former prisoners.

Over the past five years, Casey helped create and expand the Job Opportunities Task Force, which advocates for low-wage workers—especially those leaving the criminal justice system and seeking employment. Recently, the Open Society Institute–Baltimore, Casey, and other public and private funders supported Project Bridge, a program overseen by Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake. Project Bridge has provided services to 373 people both before and after their release from incarceration, including life skills, job readiness training, and placement in transitional and permanent jobs.

This work is all the more important because many formerly incarcerated people are parents. They often feel hopeless, and that can wear off on their children, says Joe Jones, president

of the Center for Fathers, Families and Workforce Development, which has provided Project Bridge training.

"It's so important for these parents to succeed," he says.

The center's STRIVE program prepares ex-prisoners and others for the workplace. During a recent session, participants explained why they were attending. "I have to start over and find a new way of living," a young man said quietly. "I need more stability," a woman said.

The three-week program provides life skills and practical help with job preparation for people often stuck in dead-end, low-wage jobs. Recognizing that ex-offenders experience ups and downs, the center works with clients for up to two years.

Casey also plans to support the Maryland Re-Entry Partnership, spearheaded by Catholic Charities, which works with former prisoners. It has shown remarkable success, reducing recidivism rates by 60 percent among its 400 participants during its first five years. ♡

**Opposite page, from left, King Teasdel, Cornelius Palmer, Gary Farlow, and Tahaisha Williams work on résumés and practice writing cover letters during a STRIVE program session in Baltimore that teaches job readiness skills to former prisoners and others. Above right, Lisa Wolinski and Jay Brashear look over material at an information booth during a financial counseling fair sponsored by the Baltimore CASH Campaign.**

## PARTNERS AND RESOURCES

The Annie E. Casey Foundation works with many valued partners in Baltimore, including other foundations, nonprofit providers, government agencies, and others. Among key partners are:

Abell Foundation; Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers; Baltimore City Department of Social Services; Baltimore Community Foundation; Baltimore Workforce Investment Board; East Baltimore Development, Inc.; Mayor's Office of Employment Development; Open Society Institute—Baltimore; Aaron Straus and Lillie Straus Foundation; Alvin and Fanny Blaustein Thalheimer Foundation; and Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation.

### RESOURCES

For more information about Casey's Family Economic Success programs in Baltimore, contact Patrice Cromwell at the Foundation, 410-547-6600.

*The following contacts offer more information on some initiatives this report highlights.*

#### EAST BALTIMORE WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Casey Family Services,  
[www.caseyfamilyservices.org](http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org),  
410-342-7554

East Baltimore Community Corporation,  
[www.ebcconline.org](http://www.ebcconline.org), 410-752-3200

East Baltimore Development, Inc.,  
[www.ebdi.org](http://www.ebdi.org), 410-234-0660

Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition/YO Center, [www.hebccac.org](http://www.hebccac.org),  
410-732-2661

Mayor's Office of Employment Development, [www.oedworks.com](http://www.oedworks.com),  
410-396-9030 (Eastside Center)

The Men's Center,  
410-614-5353

Save Middle East Action Committee,  
410-522-3360

#### FINANCIAL LITERACY, ASSET BUILDING, AND LEGAL SERVICES

The Baltimore CASH Campaign,  
[www.baltimorecashcampaign.org](http://www.baltimorecashcampaign.org),  
410-539-6800, ext. 242

Bon Secours Family Support Center/  
Our Money Place, [www.bonsecours.org/  
baltimore](http://www.bonsecours.org/baltimore), 410-362-5900

CASA of Maryland, Baltimore,  
[www.casademaryland.org](http://www.casademaryland.org),  
410-732-7777

East Harbor Community Development Corp., [www.ehcdc.org](http://www.ehcdc.org), 410-753-4152

Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service,  
[www.mvlsaw.org](http://www.mvlsaw.org), 410-547-6537

#### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Associated Builders and Contractors,  
[www.abcbaltimore.org](http://www.abcbaltimore.org), 410-821-0351

Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare, 443-451-9822

Baltimore City Department of Social Services,  
[www.dhr.state.md.us/baltocity.htm](http://www.dhr.state.md.us/baltocity.htm),  
443-423-6300

BioTechnical Institute of Maryland, Inc.,  
[www.biotechmd.org](http://www.biotechmd.org), 410-752-4224

Caroline Center,  
[www.caroline-center.org](http://www.caroline-center.org), 410-563-1303

Job Opportunities Task Force,  
[www.jotf.org](http://www.jotf.org), 410-234-8040

Maryland Center for Arts & Technology,  
[www.mcatworks.org](http://www.mcatworks.org), 410-234-4490

The Workforce Center at Sojourner-Douglass College, 410-276-4101

#### WORKFORCE AND EX-PRISONER REENTRY

Center for Fathers, Families and Workforce Development, [www.cfdw.org](http://www.cfdw.org),  
410-367-5691

Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake,  
[www.goodwillches.org](http://www.goodwillches.org), 410-837-1800

Living Classrooms Foundation,  
[www.livingclassrooms.org](http://www.livingclassrooms.org),  
410-685-0295

The Maryland Re-Entry Partnership:  
Catholic Charities,  
[www.catholiccharities-md.org](http://www.catholiccharities-md.org),  
410-261-2657



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