



The Business and Corporate Community

The Business and Corporate community has a strong interest in improving the quality of life for everyone in the region. High crime rates, inadequate educational and health care systems negatively affect the corporate community's ability to attract and retain talent. Business leaders have a responsibility to impact the violence by providing leadership and creating economic opportunities that will improve the conditions for those historically disadvantaged. Therefore, local businesses and corporations are encouraged to support positive change in these communities by taking any or all of the following steps:

- **Recognize** the value of mentoring and providing positive role models by recruiting corporate employees and leaders to develop and participate in mentoring programs for schools, agencies and community-based organizations.
- **Aggressively** seek, recruit, and retain African American and other minority applicants for all corporate levels with special emphasis on hiring individuals from the metropolitan region.
- **Encourage** African American and other minority employees to develop new skills that will prepare them for promotional opportunities. Identify minority employees who show potential for career advancement and provide greater exposure to opportunities for accelerating their growth. Develop and provide support systems that foster success, such as internal mentoring programs that partner successful employees with newly hired African American employees.
- **Utilize** more African American and minority employees to facilitate outreach efforts in the minority communities. This will provide positive exposure for the company *and* the employees while providing positive role models for African American youth.
- **Recruit** more African American and other minority managers and executives to serve on corporate boards. Encourage more executives, managers and other staff to volunteer for activities that support educational and violence prevention efforts, including sitting on boards of community-based organizations and agencies. Offer such opportunities to all staff, not just to persons of color.
- **Adopt** a school or school district in areas serving the economically disadvantaged. Assist teachers and counselors by providing mentors and/or classroom visitors who can expose students to career opportunities, as well as real life experiences. Establish reward programs that recognize students and teachers who demonstrate leadership and achievement for their work in the community and in the schools.
- **Invite** teachers, school administrators, and community members to be training partners in corporate diversity training programs.
- **Provide** leadership and skills development programs and seminars to community leaders by utilizing corporate internal training staff and/or encouraging their training vendors to volunteer their services.
- **Offer** scholarships, internships and apprenticeships as well as career exploration opportunities to economically disadvantaged students.
- **Publicize** and promote the outreach programs currently being offered so that they can serve as models for other organizations.

- **Provide** business opportunities for minority owned businesses. Research has confirmed that as minority businesses grow they are more likely to hire minorities; this facilitates economic development in their communities.
- **Educate** and communicate with neighborhood citizens and community groups on the benefits of supporting African American businesses and business development.
- **Make** a commitment to accept youth into training programs, summer employment (full-time as well as part-time). Develop and provide youth employment, mentoring, and apprenticeship programs for youth throughout the year.
- **Financially** support schools that serve economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and fund neighborhood public libraries so they can provide more and diverse resources.

The Role of the Business and Corporate Community in Restorative and Rehabilitative Justice:

The corporate community is in a unique position to affect the future of the high number of African Americans and Hispanics who have been incarcerated in Allegheny County and throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Crimes of the past must not dictate the future. In this regard, such individuals must be given a chance to start their lives anew which can impact significantly the recidivism rate in this region.

Therefore, the Business and Corporate communities should:

- **Train**, hire and provide long-term employment for persons who have served time. Local, county and state governments are strongly encouraged to provide incentives to corporations which hire such persons.
- **Lobby** the political structure and law enforcement to change the restrictive laws that currently inhibit employment, training, and educational opportunities for individuals with criminal histories.
- **Lobby** for laws that allow the records of non-violent criminals, including drug users, to be expunged, either after completion of some requirements or after a short time period following release (one to two years).
- **Create** an atmosphere of accepting those who are re-entering society and who need to feel a sense of welcome and self-worth. African American and minority-owned businesses in particular must take the lead.
- **Support** and sponsor organizations that can, and do, hire persons who have served time.
- **Provide** training and skills development programs to those with a history of incarceration.

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Civic Engagement: The Role of the Citizen

Civic participation is the foundation of Democracy. True democracy *is* government *by* the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. Civic education helps prepare people, especially the young, to carry out their roles as citizens and to help them understand that one's vote *does* matter. Therefore, to give all citizens the necessary tools to fully participate in the democratic process and to politically impact violence, we should challenge and hold accountable all elected officials, governmental bodies, and encourage social service agencies, schools, community groups *and* the family to do the following:

- **Create** an enlightened community through institutions that educate, motivate, organize, and mobilize citizens in the African American community to encourage *full participation* in a barrier-free democratic process.
- **Encourage** all citizens to participate in the struggle to eliminate barriers to civic participation that will in turn promote greater social and economic justice to enhance the quality of life for all residents.
- **Develop** educational programs, leadership training and coalitions that will strengthen and empower our communities to make voting and civic participation a cultural responsibility and tradition.
- **Institute** and expand curriculum at all grade levels to include lessons about democracy that include such topics as fundamentals of constitutional government, civil and human rights and equality before the law, free and fair elections, due process of law – which should be, and are, the pillars of democracy. Teach young people the true meaning of a *fully* democratic society.
- **Provide** formal and informal opportunities for discussion and action around civic and democratic education. Provide venues for civic engagement in schools, libraries, workplaces, civic organizations, unions, communities of faith, during campaigns and elections and through the mass media.
- **Join**, be active and support organizations that are working for social justice, community empowerment, economic empowerment and violence reduction.
- **Exercise** one's right to express one's political voice *at any time* by contacting elected officials, contacting the print and broadcast media, writing petitions and participating in other forms of active engagement to hold *all* elected officials *at all levels* of government, from the local up to the federal, accountable.
- **Make** a lifetime commitment to vote in *each and every* election to exercise one's rights as a citizen of this society. Be a willing participant at *every* level of the political process. Practice and also teach children, from an early age, to practice democratic values such as mutual respect, freedom of thought, commitment to diversity and social justice.