



Second Chances through the Culinary Arts

An Innovative Re-Entry Partnership

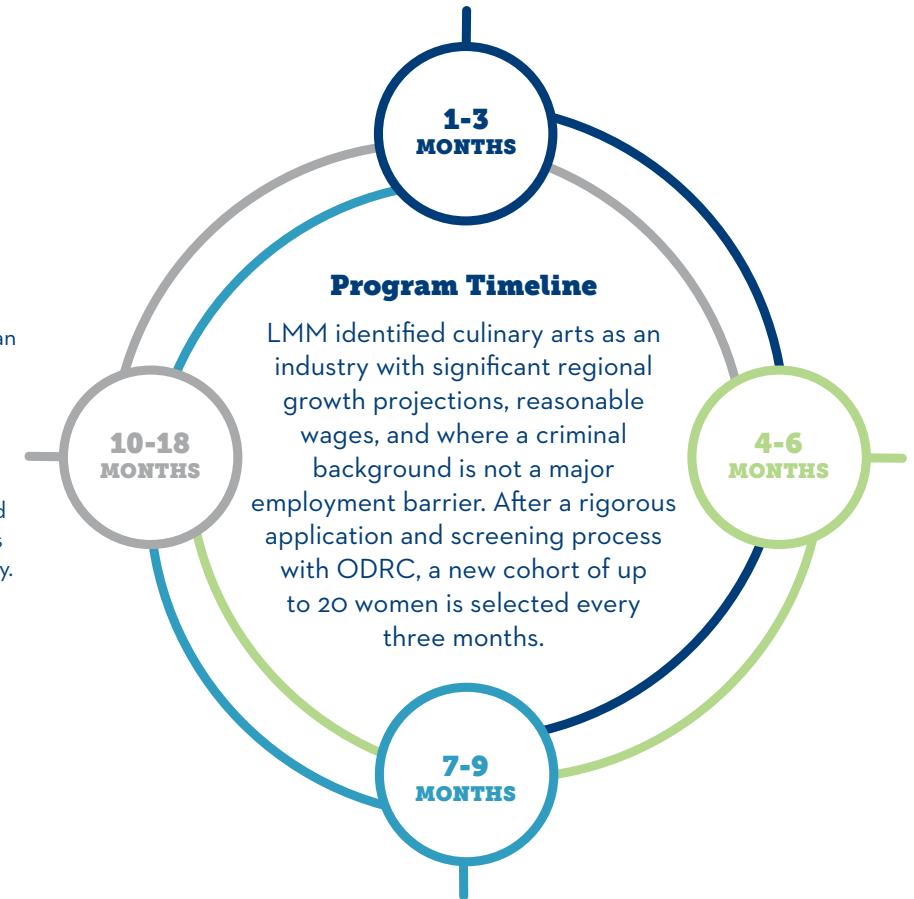


Chopping for Change

The Chopping for Change (C4C) program is a partnership between Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (LMM), the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) and the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry to provide pre-release workforce development training and behavioral health services for women in the criminal justice system. Women incarcerated at the North East Reintegration Center (NERC) in Cleveland, Ohio, come to LMM five days a week and engage in a comprehensive program which includes counseling, support services and culinary arts training. This is one of only a few programs in Ohio that takes inmates out of prison and into civilian custody for employment training. C4C provides meaningful work experience for incarcerated women, empowering them to rejoin the workforce upon release, and helping to reduce recidivism.

Participants can continue for an additional 9 months to receive a diploma in the Advanced Culinary Arts and Hospitality.

Behavioral health classes begin, including parenting, life skills, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment. Licensed clinical social workers provide one-on-one counseling, and participants meet with case managers to develop re-entry plans.



Workforce training begins and students attend lectures and lab classes on a wide variety of culinary arts topics including kitchen terminology, cooking methods, and safety and sanitation. Job readiness classes begin.

Hospitality Training Program begins, which includes courses in front-of-house service, office communication skills, and other topics to prepare students for employment in areas of the hospitality field beyond the kitchen.

Chopping for Change & Reducing Recidivism

Due to a significant increase in the population of incarcerated women, creating more resources to effectively and comprehensively address recidivism is necessary. Chopping for Change is at the forefront of cutting edge re-entry, and it's working.

The partnership is changing the perception of re-entry in the community.

→ Since its inception in **2016**, **89 women** have entered the **Chopping for Change program.**

→ **40 C4C graduates** have been released and gained employment.

→ **The recidivism rate for program graduates is 0%.**

To be selected, applicants at NERC must demonstrate a history of pro-social engagement and success in other programs. Thus, the program has become an incentive for positive behavior during incarceration, such that even those not selected to participate are more likely to engage in programming to reduce their recidivism risk.

→ LMM is working towards **accreditation** to be able to offer associate degrees to participants after release.





Community-Based Workforce Training Experience

In an effort to advance the already innovative and cutting edge Chopping for Change program, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry partnered with True Freedom Ministries, enabling the C4C women to take part in the Workforce Training Experience (WTE). True Freedom Ministries, a nonprofit like LMM, is a natural fit for the project because of their dedication to reaching and helping people who are incarcerated.

The WTE program combines vocational training with pre-release experience in an external employment setting to prepare incarcerated individuals for full employment upon release. Inmates are placed at community employment sites where they are able to receive work evaluations and referrals from employers that can be used to secure post-release jobs.

How WTE Works

Chopping for Change culinary graduates who are 9 months away from release have the opportunity to gain work experience in a café, which LMM operates in a downtown Cleveland, Ohio office building. The Comeback Café gives the women a chance to work in a high-pressure culinary environment, preparing them to work in Cleveland restaurants as a second part of the WTE program.

Following successful participation in the Comeback Café, the women may be placed in fine dining restaurants just prior to their release. Restaurants such as Marble Room, Il Venetian and Hilton Downtown Cleveland have signed on to the project with the intent to hire upon release when possible, or provide recommendations for employment.



Lutheranmetro.org



Drc.ohio.gov



Truefreedomministries.com