



# Second Chances through the Culinary Arts

An Innovative Reentry Partnership

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## **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 men and women in the criminal justice system. Women incarcerated at the Northeast Reintegration Center (NERC) in Cleveland, Ohio, and men incarcerated at Grafton Reintegration Center (GRC) in Grafton, 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 individuals, empowering them to rejoin the workforce upon release, and helping to reduce recidivism.

Behavioral health classes begin, including parenting, trauma-informed care, 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.

**1-3 MONTHS**

### **Program Timeline**

LMM identified culinary arts as an industry with significant regional growth projections, reasonable wages, and where a criminal background is not a major employment barrier. After a rigorous application and screening process with ODRC, a new cohort of up to 20 students is selected every three months.

**4-6 MONTHS**

**7-9 MONTHS**

**Continuing Education**

Following graduation, program alumni continue their education with LMM through internship opportunities, gaining workforce experience in LMM's Central Kitchen, utilizing the agency's case management services, and more.

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**

Creating more resources to effectively and comprehensively address recidivism is necessary. Chopping for Change is at the forefront of cutting edge reentry, and it's working.

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

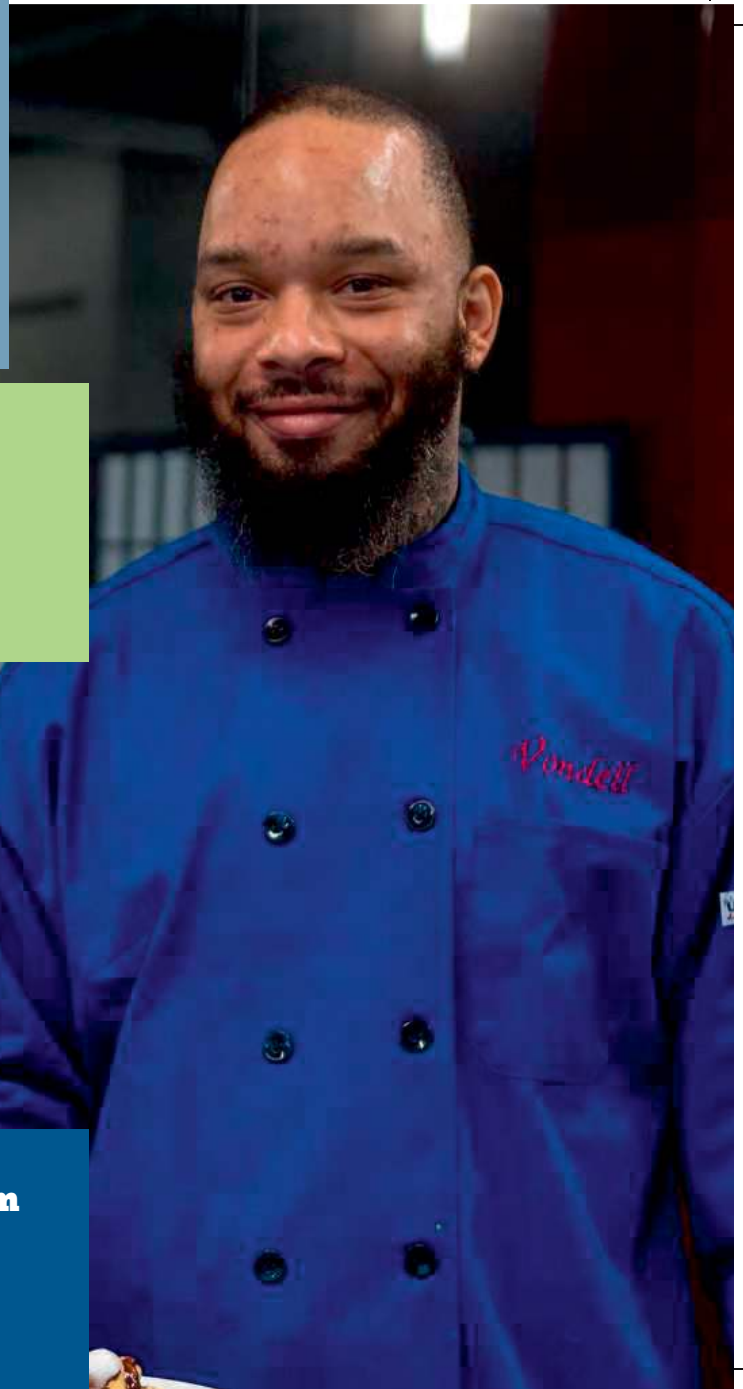


→ Since its inception in **2016**, **hundreds of women** have entered the **Chopping for Change program**. In **2022**, the program expands to **include men**.

→ **The recidivism rate for program graduates is less than 3 %.**

To be selected, applicants 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 a **certified trade program** through Ohio State Board of Career Colleges and Schools.





## **Community-Based Workforce Training Experience**

In an effort to advance the already innovative Chopping for Change program, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and LMM enable C4C students to partake in workforce training internship opportunities. The internship program combines vocational training with pre-release experience in an external employment setting to prepare incarcerated individuals for full employment upon release. Individuals 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 the Internship Program Works**

Chopping for Change culinary graduates who are less than a year away from their release date have the opportunity to gain work experience, giving the students a chance to work in a high-pressure culinary environment and preparing them for employment in Cleveland restaurants.



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**Ohio** | Department of  
Rehabilitation & Correction

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[Drc.ohio.gov](http://Drc.ohio.gov)

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