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For Immediate Release

Second Chance PREP Seeks Applicants

*The Second Chance PREP is Participating
with UCSD and SDSU in a Research Study on Recidivism*

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San Diego, CA – The Second Chance program in San Diego is actively seeking participants for its Prisoner Reentry Employment Program (PREP). Participants accepted into PREP will join a program that combines nationally-recognized STRIVE job readiness training, transitional alcohol- and drug-free housing, job placement assistance, mental health counseling, case management and addiction recovery services.

Second Chance launched the PREP in 2003. In 2004, PREP's first year of classes saw 81 participants graduate. Over the past five years program demand and recognition has grown substantially. In 2007, PREP graduated 154 participants.

Scott H. Silverman, President and CEO of Second Chance, noted that the Second Chance program in San Diego is unique among reentry efforts because of its comprehensive approach.

“Our approach to reentry, said Silverman, “differs from the less-intensive efforts that are common in the field of offender rehabilitation. However, the long-term, intensive, and comprehensive approach on crime and employment has yet to be demonstrated under a rigorous research design.”

For this reason, Second Chance officials have now teamed with researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles and San Diego State University to conduct a rigorous test of its program using an experimental design. This three-year project is funded by the Smith Richardson Foundation.

Inmate reentry strategies, Silverman explained, have remained unchanged for decades. Typically, an offender is given a small amount of money (\$20 to \$200 depending on the state) and a bus ticket. Housing arrangements are generally left up to the offender. Similarly, offenders must attempt to locate a job by carrying out the application process while still imprisoned.

“The minimal attention paid to the reentry phase,” said Silverman, “may, in part, explain why success rates of probationers and paroles in the U.S. have hovered around 50 percent for decades.

The increased focus on offender entry is promising, but only if such effort under go intensive research.”

The Second Chance PREP in San Diego already has received early recognition from the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, which specifically recommended that the San Diego program be expanded and replicated nationally.

“PREP starts at the prison gate,” said Silverman, “immediately providing the former prisoner with an alternative to his or her former environment. PREP then provides a complete job readiness program with housing to help incorporate former inmates into the regional workforce.”

Silverman noted that the entire program focuses on giving participants a hand up, not a hand out, through a tough-love approach to break down attitudes that might prevent participants from acquiring and keeping a good job, and build up positive workplace behaviors and skills. PREP is working to dramatically transform the prisoner reentry process and helping to produce self-confident, productive members of society.

“PREP not only benefits the formerly incarcerated but also their families and the community at large,” Silverman added, “helping reduce homelessness and crime in San Diego, improve public health and create broader cultures of productivity.”

The study will have 360 participants, 180 assigned to Second Chance and 180 assigned to a control group. The study is designed to assess the impact of the Second Chance Program on recidivism (based on arrest records during the 12 months following release) and employment. The study will also evaluate residential stability and payment of child support, if applicable.

Due to the high demand for the Second Chance PREP, applicants must enter into a lottery system in which all applicants have an equal chance of admittance. Referrals to other programs and organizations will be made to those who do not qualify for Second Chance.

For more information about the Second Chance Program, applicants should call Scott Silverman at 619-234-8888 or email him at ssilverman@secondchanceprogram.org. For additional information about the research project, please contact David Farabee (Principal Investigator, UCLA) at 310-267-5535 (dfarabee@ucla.edu); or Sheldon Zhang (Co-Principal Investigator, SDSU) at 619-594-5448 (szhang@mail.sdsu.edu)

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Founded in 1993, Second Chance creates opportunities for self-sufficiency by providing job readiness training, employment placement, and affordable housing and life skills for homeless and unemployed men, women and youth. Visit Second Chance at secondchanceprogram.org.