



The State Transformation in Action Recognition (STAR) Award

The STAR award is presented to successful programs which serve as models of innovation and efficiency in state governments in the Southern region.

2013



KENTUCKY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES OF THE COURTS

Veterans' Connect Program

The program requires pretrial investigations and services to ask whether an individual has been in combat and, if so, provide contact information to services available for combat veterans.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Step Down Program for Administrative Segregation

The program has reduced the number of offenders in Administrative Segregation by 53 percent; increased safety by reducing prison incidents by 56 percent; and reduced staff stress and improved morale as evidenced by a decrease in use of sick leave.

2014



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

DMV Connect

The program was designed to smooth prisoners' transition back into society by ensuring they have valid state identification upon release. The program has since expanded and the DMV now offers similar services to other populations of limited mobility, including the elderly and disabled.



WEST VIRGINIA OFFICE OF CHILD NUTRITION

Feed to Achieve

The program seeks to provide a minimum of two nutritious meals a day to schoolchildren in West Virginia by way of innovative meal delivery systems. It also incorporates innovative funding mechanisms, including directed donations and targeted federal grants, that enable the program to operate with negligible administrative cost.

2015



GEORGIA | ARMSTRONG STATE UNIVERSITY

Cyber Forensics Division

The program reduced Georgia's cyber forensics backlog from seven to 12 months to 30 days or less, and has achieved high placement rates for its interns post-graduation.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

Vital Records at DMV

The program's creative use of the DMV's service footprint improves state services while also reducing DMV wait times. The program has been proven to be transferable across agencies.



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2016



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, DIVISION OF EDUCATION (VDOC, DOE)

American Council on Education Accreditation Project

In order to reduce recidivism, VDOC, DOE offers career and technical education (CTE) courses to inmates. These courses are designed to provide inmates with the skills required to succeed in today's workforce.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Smart Scale Program

The Smart Scale program legislation established a statewide prioritization process for transportation projects that improve the efficiency of Virginia's transportation network.

2017



TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Prioritizing Student Veterans

The program promotes enrollment and degree completion by veterans in higher education, while also encouraging campuses to develop services and resources for student veterans.



WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Electronic Application Processing System

The system provides a better way for teachers to obtain or renew a West Virginia teaching certification by reducing the time to process an application from weeks to days. Applicants receive real-time status updates as their application traverses through the approval process. During the first year of the new system, more than 8,000 applications were submitted.

2018



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

K-12 Panic Button School Safety System

In 2016, an active shooter incident at an Arkansas school led to a campus lockdown. After learning that a student had a gun on campus, a teacher activated the Panic Button app, which notified all key personnel and emergency responders. Within eight minutes of activating the app, law enforcement had the gun and student in custody with no injuries reported.



TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Tennessee Promise

The program is a last-dollar scholarship that pays any tuition and fees charged at community and technical colleges that are not covered by other sources of grant aid. Each Tennessee Promise student is paired with a mentor – an adult in their community who can support them through the college and financial aid application process.



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2019	KENTUCKY PERSONNEL CABINET MyPURPOSE. Launched in 2018, MyPURPOSE provides a visually engaging portal for external job applicants, the ability to quickly apply for jobs via mobile or desktop applications or through a LinkedIn profile, and a means for state agencies to customize job postings by including videos with job posts. TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION Tennessee Reconnect With this scholarship program, Tennesseans of all ages can earn the relevant, marketable credentials necessary to succeed in the labor market. Since implementation, state-wide postsecondary degree attainment has increased to 43 percent.
2021	VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES Military Medics and Corpsman Program (MMAC) The MMAC program changes how healthcare hires medically trained service members after leaving the military and transitioning into the civilian workforce. The MMAC Program staff recruits applicants, reviews credentials, and refers approved applicants to MMAC Partner Healthcare Systems. VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS Restrictive Housing Reform for Inmates with Serious Mental Illnesses (SMI) Secure Diversionary Treatment Program (STDP) The Virginia Department of Corrections' Secure Diversionary Treatment Program addresses a critical need to safely manage the increasing population of inmates with serious mental illness in the criminal justice system by diverting them into a treatment-focused environment.
2022	NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE Seniors Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) Certification Partnering with the Fred Wilson School of Pharmacy at High Point University, the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) division created a certificate elective course for pharmacy students to become SHIIP certified counselors. The course is designed to teach students the process to develop and demonstrate competence in geriatric patient management, and it allows students to gain valuable knowledge about insurance and acquire experience serving Medicare beneficiaries in North Carolina.
2023	VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS Voice Verification Biometric Unit The Voice Verification Biometric Unit (VVBU) was created to introduce and implement a safer and more effective means of communication between probationers/parolees. The VVBU provides a comprehensive system of supervision, services, and sanctions to assist adult offenders in leading law-abiding lives, resulting in enhanced public safety.



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2025



Tennessee
Office of Reentry

TENNESSEE OFFICE OF REENTRY

The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Office of Reentry (TOOR) is a statewide comprehensive source for reentry information, direction, and planning. TOOR was created in July of 2021 to coordinate comprehensive workforce services to support Justice Involved Individuals (JIIs), via the Department's statewide network of American Job Centers (AJC). Their services are directed at justice-involved individuals who are seeking job opportunities, adult education, supportive services, or general assistance, as well as employers who are interested in learning more about Second Chance hiring.

2026



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS MOBILE REENTRY UNITS

Florida's Mobile Reentry Units bring probation services, treatment evaluations, life skills programming, and community resources directly into communities, helping reduce barriers to successful community supervision. The program has contributed to a 27 percent reduction in technical violations in participating jurisdictions while improving access to services and strengthening compliance.