

## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**  
Bill Miskell  
Public Information Officer  
Kansas Department of Corrections  
[BillM@doc.ks.gov](mailto:BillM@doc.ks.gov)  
(785) 291-3052

### **Kansas Department of Corrections' Youthful Offender Program Earns Recognition by Harvard University's Ash Center**

A Kansas Department of Corrections program aimed at reducing recidivism among youthful offenders has earned distinction as one of the nation's most promising government initiatives.

In an announcement today, the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University selected the Department of Corrections' Youthful Offender Apprenticeship Training Program (YOATP) as a "Bright Idea" program for other government agencies to study and possibly adopt to meet their own challenges.

This year's cohort of Bright Ideas was chosen by a team of expert evaluators made up of academics, practitioners and former public servants. Selected from a pool of nearly 600 applicants including smaller-scale pilots, 2010 Bright Ideas address a range of pressing issues including poverty reduction, environmental conservation and emergency management.

YOATP serves as one element in Kansas' risk reduction and re-entry efforts for youthful offenders through the creation of partnerships and the coordination of resources in communities to reduce recidivism and improve public safety. Through a partnership among the Department of Corrections, Southeast Kansas Education Service Center - Greenbush and the Kansas School for Effective Learning (KANSEL), inmates between the ages of 18 and 24 who are considered to be at high-risk for re-offending earn welding, masonry or electrical certifications during the year-long program.

Employers meet with participants in correctional facilities and through local workforce centers as offenders continue to receive employment education and support for three months after their release. The Topeka and Wichita areas were selected as the primary release points for the participants who also receive 92 hours of cognitive-based life-skills training including social skills development. Now in its second year of funding, approximately 100 participants have been served by the program that has received two grants from the U.S. Department of Labor totaling \$1.99 million.

The 2010 Bright Ideas will be showcased on the Ash Center's Government Innovators Network, an online marketplace of ideas and examples of government innovation for policymakers and practitioners. The inaugural group of Bright Ideas will serve as a cornerstone of a new online community where innovative ideas are proposed, shared and disseminated. The Ash Center's press release can be read at [www.ash.harvard.edu](http://www.ash.harvard.edu).