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## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **West-MEC hosts think tank on juvenile justice**

**Glendale, Ariz. (January, 2021)** -- West-MEC, a career and technical school district in the west valley, will hold its first Think Tank for 2022 on juvenile justice. The event on February 17th at the school district's Northwest campus will look at how the community, especially employers and education institutions can help the transition of incarcerated youth from the justice system to a productive life.

The Think Tank will host the Principal of Adobe Mountain school, Frank Burnsed and Deputy Parole Administrator, Howard Wykes to share how the justice system works with juveniles and facilitates the transition. There will be opportunities for audience members to interact with the presenters. The Think Tank will be from 8:00 a.m. to 11 a.m. Registration is \$25.

Addressing the need for the Think Tank, Wykes said, "We've seen over the last couple of years, employers provide employment to adults coming out of the adult system. It is a little more difficult for individuals coming out of the juvenile justice system."

A recent report by The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center revealed that more than 30,000 youth are incarcerated in the U.S. every year. Compared to their peers, these youth have more barriers to transition into adulthood.

Joel Wakefield, the director of professional development at West-MEC, a key organizer of the event said, "One of CTE's goals is workforce development similar to the Juvenile Justice System. We hope to show the community, especially businesses, that individuals out of the justice system can help close the widening labor gap." Wakefield continued, "The Think Tank is a way to start a conversation about the juvenile justice system. We want the event to shine a light on the stigma and challenges these adolescents face and how both schools and employers can give them a second chance at becoming successful."

Wykes added, "Through my 20 years of experience, I've seen that when youth are employed or enrolled into an educational institution, it increases their chances of success in adulthood." He continued, "They already give back to the community through community service but they can certainly give back to society by being enrolled in school or getting employed and then becoming law abiding, productive individuals."

Those interested can register for the event by clicking this link:

<https://bit.ly/JuvenileJusticePartneringtoRehabilitate>

**About West-MEC:**

**West-MEC is a career technical education public school district that focuses solely on innovative career and technical education (CTE) programs that prepare students to enter the workforce and pursue continuing education. West-MEC CTE programs provide students opportunities to earn college credit and industry credentials. West-MEC serves more than 37,000 students from 48 high schools, across 3,600 square miles in the northern and western cities of the Phoenix Metropolitan area. West-MEC now also offers adult education programs. Visit [www.west-mec.edu](http://www.west-mec.edu) for more information about West-MEC's career-driven education opportunities or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.**

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