

## JASON — WIOA Adult

Jason's life had been defined by walls—literal and metaphorical. He was born in a neighborhood where opportunities were scarce, and drugs were common. Through his poor choices, he spent a total of sixteen (16) years in prison.

Jason learned quickly that the world outside was moving on without him, while he was stuck in a small, cold cell. He could have succumbed to bitterness and given in to the hopelessness that many of his fellow inmates felt. But somewhere, deep down, Jason knew he still had a chance at something more. He wasn't ready to let the mistakes of his youth define the rest of his life. He completed his high school education and thus learned discipline, resilience and the art of not giving up.

When his last sentence was over, the streets, the people, even the technology—all seemed unfamiliar. He had little money and no job experience, but he had something more valuable: a hunger to rebuild his life.

He knew he couldn't go back to his old ways. He was tired of the direction his "old" life took him having disappointed his family and himself. He needed a career, something that would give him stability and a sense of purpose,



one including a better relationship with his daughter. James had always admired truck drivers — men and women who spent their days on the open road, traveling from one place to the next. It seemed like a world far away from the confined walls of his past. So, he decided to earn his Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

Working with Melissa Clark in the OS Reentry Services program and Don Palmer at Michigan Works! West Central, Jason was enrolled in training at FCG Truck Driver Training in

Bryon Center.

"Without Michigan Works and Melissa, it never would have happened for me. I didn't have the money or a place to stay and you both helped so much," Jason said.

After a coursework of preparation, James passed his CDL exam. The moment he received his license, he felt a sense of accomplishment unlike anything he'd ever felt. It was a tangible symbol of everything he had worked for. Now, he had the skills to forge a new path, to prove that no matter how dark a past, it

didn't have to define the future.

He found a job with a trucking company in Grand Island, Nebraska, where he started in April 2025.

Jason's story is a beacon of hope—a reminder that no matter how much time you've lost or how many mistakes you've made, there's always a path forward. Success didn't come easily for him, but through hard work, perseverance, and an unyielding belief in the possibility of change, he proved that even the darkest pasts could lead to a bright future.