



March 2, 2016 Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Adams Sibley (CELR Center), Stacie McGeehan (Mercer County Human Services), Perry Shaw III (A Better Way), Tara Butler (A Better Way), Alba Medina (Probation/Drug Court), Leroy Peterson (Probation/Drug Court), Alex Rivera (City of Trenton), Gary Brown (CEC/Bo Robinson), Perry Shaw Jr. (A Better Way), Candya Myers (Community Corrections Student), Janice Howard-Jackson (Community Corrections Student), Tashia Grimes (Probation), Martha Eustache (A Better Way), Giovannia Pirrella (Trenton Violence Reduction Strategy), Sophia Robinson (Dept of Corrections), Wendi White (Dept of Corrections), Denise Higgins (Catholic Charities), Lorna Colligan (MCBOSS), Craig Morris (MCCC), Bryan Turner (Community Corrections Student), Ryan Pilarski (Isles)

Meeting commenced at 1:40pm.

Members introduced themselves and reviewed the February minutes, which were accepted by consensus.

New Business:

Alex Rivera from the City of Trenton presented on the Capital City My Brother's Keeper initiative. In February 2014, President Obama launched My Brother's Keeper, a call for community to come together to close the achievement gap for young men of color. The planning process identified three issue priorities: employment for 16-25 year olds, early childhood literacy, and chronic absenteeism.

At a recent action summit, members of the employability committee mentioned reentry as a special concern. Some ideas that came out of the meeting include: mentorship, incentives for hiring, drug laws as obstacles, expungement policy, and employer awareness.

Members discussed playing an advisory role for MBK regarding reentry issues, but stressed that they hope something productive comes out of the planning process.

Chair updates:

The 2nd annual Mercer County Reentry Conference has been postponed until the 21st or 28th of May, two dates that are available for keynote speaker Congresswoman Bonnie Watson-Coleman. Working groups will continue the conversation about what topics and needs should be addressed at the event.

Jersey City is hosting a reentry conference March 24 from 9am-4pm at Saint Peter's University. Al Sharpton is the keynote speaker. In collaboration with Logan Township Frank Minor, free transportation will be provided to and from the event, departing from Trenton. The event likewise is free. Contact Perry Shaw III for more information.

The first evening Task Force meeting will be held in April at TrentonWorks. Like last year, this will be an opportunity for community members who cannot attend the regular meeting to join the conversation. Date to be announced.

Adams Sibley and Ryan Pilarski discussed a reinvigorated effort to establish a Syringe Access Program in Trenton. They, along with Perry, will meet with the Drug Policy Alliance on Thursday, March 3. The DPA is looking for community advocates to co-sign the effort.

Members discussed the new working group structure, built around four areas: Employment & Education, Health, Housing & Social Services, and Community & Family Support. Members ranked their preference of working group from 1-4 and will be sorted by the next meeting.

Final thoughts and announcements:

Members discussed recent news at the Mercer County Correction Center, which is slated to ship a large number of inmates to Hudson County as a cost-cutting measure. Several individuals expressed concern about the ensuing job cuts and logistical difficulties of doing so, as well as the prospect of gang activity in the Hudson County facility.

The Square 2 reentry resource app continues to be updated. Two TCNJ interns have been assigned to the project for the semester. The address for the app is <http://square2nj.org/>

Denise Higgins expressed concern that one of her clients can't find housing. The client approached Volunteers of America but was told they don't have any housing to provide. Perry will be meeting with Trenton Housing Authority Director Bucky Leggett in April to discuss housing for the reentry population.

There are still 3 slots available for free expungements through A Better Way's I Am Trenton grant. For referrals, contact Perry Shaw III (pshawiii@abetterwayinc.org), Adams Sibley (sibleya@tcnj.edu), or Andrew Huzar (huzara@tcnj.edu).

Meeting adjourned at 2:42pm.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday April 6, 2016.