

Mercer County Reentry Task Force

Meeting Date: Wednesday, January 9, 2013

Location: 218 N. Broad Street, 2nd Floor, Trenton NJ

In Attendance

Herb Levine-Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness, **Stacie McGeehan**-Mercer County Department of Human Services, **Linda Rogers**- Mercer County, **Darren Ivey**-Community Education Centers, **Lorna Colligan**-Mercer Board of Social Services, **Denise Higgins**-Catholic Charities, **Wendi Kornberg**-DOC Office of Drug Programs, **Lt. James Dickinson** -NJ Parole Board, and **Craig Morris**- Mercer County Community College, **Kamran Hakiman**-Bonner Foundation, **Cindy Morgan**-Helping Arms, **Tonya Coy** -UIH Family Partners, **Luis Rivera**- Mercer County Career One-Stop, **Larry Davis**-Urban Alternative Solutions, LLC. **Doris Mesinoff** -Board of Social Services, **Dennis Micai**-Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK), **Ashley Anderson**-Intern at TASK, **Anastasia Jackson**-Parole

Staff: Michelle Daniels- AmeriCorps VISTA at Bonner Center- recorded minutes.

Stacie handed out the Agenda and November 7, 2012 Minutes.

Larry handed out a brochure for Urban Alternative Solutions, LLC Holistic Treatment Center

1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting was called to order at 1:41P.M. Those present did a round of introductions.

2. Agency Updates

Larry Davis-Urban Alternative Solutions, LLC- presented his organization—Urban Alternative Solutions, LLC. Holistic Treatment Center— which is located on 1418 South Broad Street. It serves both young and adult men population. Some services include Mental Health, Anger Management and Domestic Violence Prevention. Larry stated that he is looking for referrals. All types of major insurance are accepted.

Larry was asked to elaborate on the type of referrals. He mentioned chemical dependency, mental illness and a variety of other services are available. Services are paid by insurance company Horizon and Medicaid. He has received referrals from Mercer County and Probation and wants to offer more groups. He has also reached out to Perry at A Better Way.

There is an employment resource center to help find employment. Larry mentioned that there are positions available for people without drug felony charges. Anastasia invited Larry to come to her probation office and speak.

Mercer County Community College- "Spring Semester" - **Craig Morris** handed out Mercer County Community College brochures and shared information for the spring semester. Programs are for 7.5 months, held Monday through Fridays with 6 hour days. He also

mentioned that students, who participate with the Culinary-Arts program, do their internship on-site in the café.

3. Strategic Focus

First 30-Days Campaign cont.

Herb stated that we need to be enlisting community members to engage with individuals while they are behind bars and then to provide assistance within the first 30-days and hopefully it can continue beyond that point.

Herb mentioned that working with individuals from Bo Robinson is well aligned with the goals behind the First 30-Days Campaign because a higher percentage of its population is from Mercer County. Developing a relationship while the individual is behind bars is vital. Lt. James Dickinson concurred and said that they need that connection. Herb communicated that local pastors are also making connections with people at Bo Robinson.

He stated that Pat Donohue from the Bonner Center got a grant and has hired guys and Jayson Rogers is one of the mentors. Herb described the process in which they are using a mentoring curriculum with individuals while they are behind bars, but there is no support or component for when they return to the community.

Herb asked for agency experiences with Bo Robinson:

UIH - Tonya stated the staff at UIH do programs at Bo Robinson and some of the Bo Robinson clients volunteer at UIH.

Trenton Area Soup Kitchen – Dennis stated that Mr. Muhammad, Program Director from Bo Robinson is doing a great job. Individuals from Bo Robinson are working on work-release at TASK, with no complaints. The population being served is actively engaged and some have obtained factory and waitressing jobs. There are 6 to 7 work sites and there is a high screening process. Dennis also stated that they seem to have effective gender separated programs.

Helping Arms – Cindy added that Helping Arms regularly works with people at Bo Robinson.

4. New Business

“Ban the Box”

The NJ Institute for Social Justice got the City of Newark to get rid of the “Ban the Box” requirements for city employment. Do we want to follow suit in Trenton? Dennis advised that it will have to be done with caution. He continued and stated that he was at a Chamber meeting and non-profit members wanted the “Box” because the background of an individual has to be known when dealing with children.

Herb mentioned that unless it is job related it should not be present. He continued and said that a presentation at the NJ Institute for Social Justice can be arranged to see how the

process is done. He stated to the group that we can begin with Trenton, and then asked how would the group like to start the process?

Luis Rivera commented that the "Box" should be limited to specific jobs and mentioned sex offenders as an example. He claimed that it's the biggest barrier and that people will be broken down by the process. He stated that it's the basis of discrimination. Luis suggested going for a statewide ban. Why limit it to Trenton?

Herb wants to have a victory like Newark and Philadelphia, who got it banned. He stated that NJ Institute for Social Justice will advise us how to move forward. We can find out who wants to participate and how we can support them.

There was widespread agreement that this is a crucial area to work on.

Mercer County Re-entry Task Force Website

Herb mentioned that Michelle has been working on a website for the task force. He would like the style to be similar to the one on the County website. Michelle will send out a link and get feedback from members about the website.

Housing Vouchers - Cindy announced that Helping Arms has been awarded permanent housing vouchers through the Trenton/Mercer COC to house ex-offenders - those with mental health illness and drug addiction.

COAH - Denise asked for an update on the status of COAH – Council on Affordable Housing. Herb responded that it's at the Supreme Court awaiting a decision.

Homeless Connect - Herb announced that there is a service fair on January 29th. For more information members can reach out to Tarry Truitt at ttruitt@merceralliance.org. There will be over a hundred volunteers from the community and about 400 to 500 homeless individuals will be helped. The fair will provide giveaway bags, haircuts, hot meals, the Scott Fairman Homeless ID project, clothing, leads and referral services.

Herb also announced that on January 29th and 30th there will be a 24 hour Homeless Count. Volunteers work for 3 hours each to see where people are living off the track.

Denise stated that every group should have a presence. Hours are 9A.M. to 3P.M. Donations of gently used coats, tube socks and shoes are accepted. For more information check the website.

Meeting adjourned at 2:33P.M.

Next meeting is on March 6, 2013 at 218 N. Broad Street (2nd Floor), Trenton, NJ @1:30PM