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Kings County Re-Entry Task Force

Bi-Monthly Meeting of November 12, 2015 – Minutes

Meeting Date:	Wednesday November 12, 2015	
Meeting Time:	12:30 pm – 2:30 pm	
Meeting Location:	Office of the Kings County District Attorney 350 Jay Street, 19 th Floor – Bob Kaye Room, Brooklyn, NY 11201	
Attendees:	<p>PSCH: Alyse LaRue SAMARITAN VILLAGE/DAYTOP: Trevor Reid NYC COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS: William Whitaker SOARING EAGLES: Judith Douglas CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES: Lily Fender NYC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH: Maria Angela Soto , Millicent Freeman A HOUSING SOLUTION: Ronald Williams BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES: Wesley Caines BROTHERHOOD OF ST. ANDREW: Bertrand Gordon BROWNSVILLE THINK TANK MATTERS: Ronald Robertson CENTER FOR APPELLATE LITIGATION: Brittany Francis, Susannah Karlin HOUSING WORKS: Samuel Hamilton COUNSELING SERVICE OF THE EASTERN DISTRICT: Michele Nelson GANGSTA MACK: Hailey Nolasco SHADES OF A WOMAN: Stephanie Riley THE DOE FUND: Charles Bryant SHINDA MANAGEMENT: ChristopherR. Bramwell, Jr. FORTUNE SOCIETY: David Nidus GETHSEMANE CHURCH - FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: Richard Green EVERGREEN BAPTIST CHURCH: Andre Palmer UNITED METHODIST PARISH: Cheryl Robinson</p> <p>Calvin Hibbert Ms. Mary Johnson Carlene Burgin, S. Merritt</p>	

ITEM #	ITEM	DESCRIPTION AND ACTION ITEMS
1	Call to Order	This meeting was called to order by Mr. Christopher Owens, Co-Chair at 1:00pm. The Chair asked Ms. Amanda Ritchie, a summer intern with the King's County District Attorney's Office ("KCDA"), to take minutes for the meeting.
2	Opening remarks	Opening remarks and presentation of agenda for November 12, 2015.
3	Presentation of meeting minutes from May 20 th	The Chair requested the attendees to review the Minutes from the July 22, 2015 KCRTF Bi-Monthly Meeting, and to contact the co-chairs if there were any comments or concerns that required correction.
4	Introductions	<p>Those in attendance introduced themselves and the organizations they represented. The Chair also acknowledged the presence of staff members who are part of the KCDA.</p> <p>The Chair introduced co-Chair Michelle Yon, from the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and the new Co Chair Ms. Audrey Thompson, Re-entry manager from the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS).</p> <p>The chair then introduces a new employee to the King County District Attorney's Office and the new Co-Chair standing in the large shoes of Chris Owens. Maria Abadia spoke about her education (law degree) and her past employment with alternative to incarceration and the close symbiotic relationship between alternatives to incarceration and re-entry services. Ms. Abadia expressed her enthusiasm for her new role and her excitement at meeting everyone in the room.</p> <p>The Chair then proceeded to introduce Dr. Vanda Seward, Coordinator of the KCRTF.</p>
5	Coordinator's Report	<p>I. Coordinator's Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Update regarding CBI – OWDS training and implementation: b. Update regarding CBI – Thinking 4 Change: <p>Dr. Vanda Seward introduced the CBI initiatives. CBI, especially Thinking For Change is offered in the NYS Department of Correctional System while a person is incarcerated. It is part of their phase three programming as the person is transitioning out into the community. Many may say, "What is the purpose of doing it again?" The purpose is the way in which you have to think and adjust when you're inside of an institution varies in how you make decisions on the outside. The purpose of the CBI is to get an individual to begin to process, make better decisions and to find other alternatives when dealing with difficult situations.</p> <p>Ready Set Work is also considered CBI since individuals are assisted in identifying their barriers to employment. Asking them "what kind of job would you like, what kind of environment are you interested in working in?" We are no longer pushing people just to take a job because if we do they're not going to keep the job and retention will be low. It's getting them to see how they look as they are interviewing and engaging with each other. Recently, we were able to tape them and give them a copy of the CD this will enable them to review and improve where necessary.</p> <p>Ready Set Work, located in the local office, 210 Joralemon is open to people approved for ACCES as well as individuals whom need assistance in improving their job skills and abilities.</p> <p>In Ready Set Work we have incorporated community organizations. For example, human rights, financial planning, popular bank, hope lives. These programs teach these individuals financial planning, how to repair and build credit free of cost. What we have noticed is that we've had a few instances where individuals had bad credit and they weren't aware that someone else had been using their social security number while they were incarcerated. We also found that individuals were under the assumption that they had a lot of debt and they didn't and were able to start working and create a plan to pay off their debt and improve their credit.</p> <p>Financial planning is about a mental state. It is about "how do you invest in self, family, community?" When we speak about "investments, it is not only the monetary piece, it also includes mentally and spiritually. Once all of these are all intertwined then you start</p>

prioritizing them.

As we begin to meet our clients where they are at we have to be very creative in how we address each group because every group is different based upon who is sitting in the office.

Dr. Vanda Seward opened the table for any questions. Question: 1 “How many weeks do you administer your ‘Thinking for Change’ program?” Answer: 13 weeks from 10am-12:30pm.

There is a time requirement that must be adhered to and followed for our programs. Sometimes our clients have situations come up which will interfere with scheduled groups but we try to make-up the time and if the issues are on-going we will stop them and have them restart at the next cohort.

Question: 2 “Do the individuals receive a certificate upon completion?” Answer: Yes, for the Ready Set Work program they receive a certificate upon completion and for the Thinking for Change program a commencement exercise is conducted and they receive a certificate upon completion.

c. **KCRTF committee update:**

Case Conference Committee

- i. **New Referrals – We are receiving** referrals with the help of Audrey Thompson and Michelle Yon . In addition we have increased our referrals by sending out correspondence to the facilities. The task force is receiving referrals within one-hundred and twenty days (120) prior to release from prison. We have noticed a change in the type of services that are being sought. Clients are not only coming for assistance with substance abuse and mental health services but they are seeking assistance with everything. You do not need to have a drug or mental health problem in order for the Re-Entry Task Force to assist you.

Dr. Vanda Seward opened the table for any questions. Question: 1 “Is there an application that must be completed in order to receive services?” Answer: No. If you would like to refer someone to us you may call us or send them to us. We have a walk-in policy, whoever walks in we will service. There is no one that is exempt from the services provided by the D.A.’s Kings County Re-Entry Task Force. Once they come in, we will figure out their risk scores, if they’re coming from federal or state prison or city jail and from there we will determine if they’re suitable for the Task Force or are they suitable for ComAlert. The difference between the two is that the Task Force handles the high risk cases; ComAlert handles low-moderate risk cases.

Public Education Committee

- i. **Event- Here to be Seen: Women and Justice – Nov. 17th** – Dr. Vanda Seward introduced the “Here to be Seen: Women and Justice” performance to attendees. The cast is a combination of professional actors along with formally incarcerated women. The event is free of cost with a light reception and entertainment. We will have resource tables available. Thus far we have four KCRTF/ Com Alert clients that will be working as ushers. We will have Parole officers whom will serve as security and also be given the opportunity to watch the play as well. On the bottom of the pamphlet the sponsors were listed and we greatly appreciate everyone who has assisted us in this venture.
- ii. **KCRFT Internet Presence (postponed)** – The internet has been postponed until further notice. Information on programs and service are still being gathered.
- iii. **KCDA Begin Again (Bed-Stuy) – December 5th** - Chris Owens introduced the “Begin Again” program to attendees. It is geared towards individuals particularly residents of Brooklyn. Those whom have an outstanding warrant may be able to get it cleared but it is limited to certain types of warrants. We have had two – (2) “Begin Again” events within the past year that have been extremely successful. The first had over one-thousand- 1,000 individuals and the second we had over seven-hundred- (700) individuals attended. In total we have cleared over fifteen hundred – (1,500) warrants for individuals.
- iv. **DCJS Conferences – Department of Labor Information – November 6th** – Dr. Vanda Seward discussed with attendees the prosperity of New York City’s as far as job growth is concerned. Brooklyn is growing quicker than any place in relation

		<p>to the workforce and job growth. It has a lot to do with the home health, food industry and hospitality. The stats reflected good news of NYC as a whole. Maria Abadia informed attendees of the imminent business booming in Williamsburg, Brooklyn such as Trader Joes, Bloomingdales outlet etc. which have employment opportunities. The labor Department website is useful tool to see the businesses opening in your community.</p> <p>Question: 1 “Was there any discussion about the skill sets essential for prospective employees or was there any discussion about industries and/or businesses not doing so well in Brooklyn. Answer: Entry level skills from retail, restaurants and hotels are needed to work in these businesses. Since businesses in Williamsburg often go out of business, we don’t necessarily want to send our clients but it’s a way to jump start their experience and get them working. The main focuses were just entry level skills.</p> <p>Christopher Bramwell, Construction Developer informed attendees on his experience with hiring formally incarcerated individuals. Bramwell stated that many years ago when he had difficulty hiring individuals he noticed that many of those whom he was interviewing had a criminal record. What he noticed was that his formally incarcerated employees turned out to be more reliable than those whom did not have a criminal history. Bramwell stated that the reason why he was present was because he wanted to do more to help those formally incarcerated individuals because he has experienced their loyalty and also believes in second chances.</p> <p>Dr. Vanda Seward informed attendees on the CBI numbers and mentioned that by the next cohort they would have already met 75% of their deliverables. By the next meeting Ms. Seward will be able to give a more accurate accounting since a six month measure is more concrete than a ninety-(90) day measure.</p>
6	Fiscal Report	Tabled by the Chair.
7	Reports/concerts	Trevor Reid informed attendees that over the past weekend (October 30 th - November 1 st) the Federal Government released 6,000 non-violent federal felons. Over the next several years, 45,000 non-violent federal felons are expected to be released. Mr. Reid stated that there are 10 states with very high numbers of released individuals. The states are as follows: Arizona – 107, California - 229, Florida – 295, Iowa – 145, Illinois - 253, North Carolina – 218, New York – 141, South Carolina - 102, Tennessee – 150 and Texas – 578.
8	Guest presentations	<p>William Whitaker re Ban the Box: Dr. Vanda Seward introduced William Whitaker to the audience. Whitaker discussed the human rights law. The Commission on Human Rights has jurisdiction in three areas - housing, employment and public places. “Fair Chance Act” or “Ban the Box” is removing the arrest or conviction question from job application. On October 26th, 2015 this act went into effect in New York. On September 23rd, the “Fair Credit Reporting Act” went into effect. This means that your credit score and /or credit history may not be used in determining employment. If there are federal statutes that mandate a background check then a background check will be conducted. If there are State laws for certain types of employment then there will be a background check. Background checks will only be conducted after the initial job interview.</p> <p>William Whitaker opened the table to questions. Question 1: Are employers allowed to associate “burglary” with any category of employment. Answer: That is a violation of the law because there are other factors that must be considered. i.e., ‘proof of rehabilitation’, how they pose a threat to the company, etc.</p> <p>Pedro Barry (Hope Lives) re Entrepreneurship Training: Moving Forward: Tabled.</p>
9	New Business	Dr. Vanda Seward announced that on December 10 th KCRTF is holding a Re-entry forum under Assembly member Walker at Brookdale Hospital. Doors open at 5 pm. Fliers will be sent out to attendees.
10	Adjournment	The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.