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Kings County Re-Entry Task Force

Bi-Monthly Meeting of May 20, 2015 – Minutes

Meeting Date:	Wednesday May 20, 2015	
Meeting Time:	12:15 pm – 1:45 pm	
Meeting Location:	Brooklyn Public Library- Brooklyn Heights Branch 280 Cadman Plaza West (& Pierrepoint St), Auditorium- 1 st Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201	
Attendees:	<p>ACCES-VR: Wendy Hersh</p> <p>BRIGHTPOINT HEALTH: Naatifah Costello</p> <p>BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES: Wesley Caines</p> <p>BROTHERHOOD OF ST. ANDREW: Bertrand Gordon</p> <p>BROWNSVILLE THINK TANK MATTERS: Albert Mathieu, Ronald Robertson, Cyrus Smith</p> <p>CENTER FOR APPELLATE LITIGATION: Susannah Karlin</p> <p>CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK: Carol Guatt</p> <p>COUNSELING SERVICES – EDNY: Saad Butt</p> <p>DEFY VENTURES: Damarcus Adisa, Tarell Rodgers</p> <p>THE DOE FUND: William Glenn</p> <p>FORTUNE SOCIETY: Ann Travers</p> <p>PSCH: Alyse LaRue</p> <p>SHADES OF WOMEN: Stephanie Riley</p> <p>UNIVERSAL CHURCH: Marva Harris Small</p>	<p><u>KCRTF - KCDA</u> Christopher Owens, Co-Chair Designate Dr. Vanda Seward, Coordinator Norma Fernandes, Case Manager Andrea Johnson, Case Manager</p> <p><u>KCRTF – DOCCS</u> Michelle A. Yon, Co-Chair Designate Petero Sabume</p> <p><u>KCDA – Bureau of Youth Diversion & Re-entry Programs</u> Melissa Lee, Intern</p> <p><u>KCDA – ComALERT</u> Fredda Broza, Job Developer Mary Beth Melendez, Case Manager</p> <p><u>KCDA – Fiscal</u> Leleah Robinson, Grants Manager</p>

ITEM #	ITEM	DESCRIPTION AND ACTION ITEMS
1	Call to Order	This meeting was called to order by Mr. Christopher Owens , Co-Chair, at 12:15 pm. The Chair asked Ms. Melissa Lee , a summer intern with the Kings County District Attorney’s office, to take the minutes of the meeting.
2	Opening remarks	The Chair noted that the new meeting location was better suited for the KCRTF meetings, given the larger space and the air conditioning.
3	Presentation of meeting minutes from March 25 th	The Chair requested that the attendees review the Minutes of the March 25 th KCRTF Bi-monthly Meeting, and to immediately 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 acknowledged the presence of other staff members from the Kings County District Attorney’s office.</p> <p>The Chair then introduced Dr. Vanda Seward, Coordinator of the Kings County Re-entry Task Force, to present her report.</p>
5	Coordinator’s Report	<p><i>Update on DCJS RFP for new CRTF grant/contract</i></p> <p>Dr. Seward stated that the DCJS grant proposal due April 6 for the next three-year period was submitted and approval is expected in the near future.</p> <p>Dr. Seward stated that the KCRTF staff recognizes the changing needs of the Brooklyn re-entry population and the need to be creative and adjust to those changes.</p> <p>Dr. Seward reviewed diagrams from the agenda packet regarding the referral and intake processes – with DOCCS being the primary source of KCRTF referrals. She also explained how the use of DOCCS Risk Score assist in the referral process.</p> <p><i>Incarcerated individuals are assigned a Risk Score which reflects risk to recidivate and type of services that the individual needs upon release. The result is a process that is more individualized per client rather than a “one size fits all” approach. In this process, a low (1-3) risk score represents an individual who has limited family support, education and job skills; the opposite applies for higher risk scores. The latter group is more likely not to recidivate and, therefore, is not considered to be KCRTF-eligible. In addition to the higher likelihood of recidivism, KCRTF eligibility also applies to “special needs populations” (women, mentally ill, sex offenders). Individuals who do not have either the required risk score or fall within the definition of the special needs populations are eligible and referred to ComALERT.</i></p> <p>Mr. Owens stressed that the risk scores under discussion are only applicable to individuals released from New York State Prisons; those who are released from city or federal facilities are only eligible for ComALERT, regardless of risk, as well as those individuals who do not meet the other eligibility criteria for KCRTF.</p> <p><i>Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS) Training</i></p> <p>As discussed during the March 25th meeting, the OWDS training provides attendees with teaching, motivation and service tools regarding “job readiness.” The OWDS training pushes the service provider to focus on client’s individualized needs in determining potential career paths and job skills.</p> <p>Dr. Seward noted that there are a total of three OWDS sessions, two of which have been completed by Ms. Fernandes and herself. She stated that the training, however difficult, is an asset to the KCRTF, overall.</p> <p><i>Cognitive Behavioral Intervention(CBI): Thinking For a Change</i></p> <p>Dr. Seward noted that the new DCJS grant requirements focus on CBI programming by KCRTF participants and that she decided that the OWDS component should be supplemented in additional to the Ready Set Work program already being adminstred at KCDA reentry unit. Thinking 4 Change training workshop will kick off on June 15 and will run for 13 weeks.</p> <p>Dr. Seward explained that because of the ability to operate out of parole once a week, the DOCCS/Parole staff are able to identify individuals who will participate. Most significantly, individuals with the anger management mandate without the substance abuse or mental illness mandate are able to participate and meet their anger management mandated requirement. Carfare will be provided, and dress code of a collared shirt and tie is required (parole officers have been requested to donate).</p> <p>The training is funded by DCJS. For more information on T4C visit the National Institute of Corrections website..</p> <p>Mr. Owens explained that the DCJS strongly encourages all task forces to register for the training, out of desire for every task force to be equipped with similar tools. The grant allows the KCDA to send another individual to receive the training, which in the future will allow multiple trainings to occur</p>

simultaneously. He recognized the significant amount program development that exists at the state level to create more innovative services for the formally incarcerated. The governor has organized a council and the involved agencies to create more aggressive and original tactics. Mr. Owens recommended the KCRTF to remain creative to expand on proposed ideas and to be able to suggest reintroduction strategies to other counties.

Tarell Rodgers of Defy Ventures discussed how facilitators often lack training as motivational interviewers. Rather than push their ideas for change on the people they were serving, this type of training encourages the staff to act as interviewers.

KCRTF Committee Update

Case Conference Committee

The KCRTF has been receiving more referrals directly from individuals who are 120 days from release, which allows the staff to best evaluate which program best suits the individual. The information that is received includes mental health, family composition, who the individual plans to live with, domestic violence, education and other pertinent information; all of which may be used to map out the most effective service plan. Ideally, the individual is to report to the offices within 24 hours after release. There are staff present on the premises of parole on Thursdays between 10 am and 2 pm; the committee also plans to provide an educational campaign for the parole officers who are not familiar with the services.

Public Education Committee

The sex offender training that took place on **April 1st** had an outpour of interest from various groups; the panel consisted of members from the NYPD sex offender monitoring unit and a representative from the Kings County District Attorney's Office victim services, DOCCS/Parole Sex Offender Monitor Unit and NYCATS treatment program for sex offenders. The large variety of participants was able to offer their differing viewpoints. Meeting attendees discussed how it was stimulating to discuss topics that are misunderstood or often neglected.

The **Entrepreneurship and Re-entry Session** that took place on **May 6th** was also well-attended. The forum attracted formally incarcerated individuals who already have a business. These individuals were able to summarize their own experiences and provide advice on how to map out a business plan. The formally incarcerated are often unable to commit to attending a substantial amount of education on a consistent basis. The mission of the session was to inform attendees of existing resources, inspire individuals with their potential options and encourage them to enroll in any form of an educational program.

The **DCJS Re-Entry Job Summit** session that took place on **May 8th** consisted of statisticians who discussed the economic prospects in the New York area. Mr. Owen advocated for an aggressive approach in getting individuals on a regular education track; he expressed his concern of the widening gap between decent paying jobs for those who have a certain level of education and the rest of the population. To continue to delay proper education will only lead to future complications. Dr. Seward stated that the issues that other areas of New York are discussing have already been examined in Brooklyn; learning about Long Island's re-entry struggles highlights the progressive nature of Brooklyn's work.

The **DOCCS Open House** is to take place on **June 9th** and because of security concerns, it is invitation only. Dr. Seward suggested that if any of the meeting's participants wish to attend the event, they should send her an email.

The next mandatory **ACCES Re-entry Consortium Meeting** is to take place on **June 11th** at the ACCES office. The intended topic is titled "Children of the Incarcerated: the Silent Voice"; emails will be sent out regarding the times of the event. Among the various panelists will be a warden from a federal prison, and there will also be a showing of a Sesame Street video intended for children of the incarcerated.

Making the Change at the Red Hook Community Justice Center on **June 23rd** is a closed event in which individuals who were formally incarcerated can discuss with young individuals who are dangerously close to being incarcerated the risk of their behavior; it is usually mandated by a judge and run by Karen Gopee. The event, which was once quarterly, is about to increase their numbers, and be rotated to various locations. Mr. Owens requested anyone who wishes to participate as a panelist or speaker at this event to express their interest at the meeting. Three meeting participants expressed their interest.

		<p>Mr. Owens stated that both the entrepreneurship and sex offender sessions were videotaped and that the videos should be available for all viewers on their website shortly.</p> <p>DOCCS co-chair <i>Michelle Yon</i> arrived at the meeting and introduced herself.</p>
6	Fiscal Report	<p><i>Fiscal Report</i></p> <p>Mr. Owens circulated the chart illustrating the 2014-2015 KCDA re-entry statistics. It revealed the re-entry intake and retention tallies as well as the KCDA and DCJS benchmarks for the year 2015.</p> <p>The KCDA has surpassed the expectations for the 45 and 90 day retention rate (or the number of people who remained engaged within the program). As of May 11th, 2015, the intake number was 241 of the targeted 250 individuals; approximately a 96.4% success rate. However, because this was data from May 11th, 2015, the 250 number is expected to have been surpassed at this point. Because of the cooperation of DOCCS, during the next fiscal year, the 250 goal is certain to be outperformed. The district attorney's office considers tactics that are effective at KCRTF should also be effective at ComALERT. The 406 statistic represents the total intake for KCRTF and ComALERT combined; it is expected to be higher by the end of the fiscal year 2015.</p> <p>KCDA is positioned to be more successful in the next cycle. Mr. Owens acknowledged the continuous efforts of the CSEDNY and ACCES staff.</p>
7	Reports/concerts	N/A
8	Guest presentations	<p><i>Wesley Cains, Re-Entry Specialist, Brooklyn Defender Services(BDS)</i></p> <p>Mr. Wesley Cains attended this meeting to provide meeting participants with information regarding the re-entry efforts at the Brooklyn Defender Services. The BDS is a legal aid law firm located in downtown Brooklyn focused on criminal defense; he estimated that the BDS works with approximately 45,000 clients each year. Part of BDS's aim is to empower every client to be able to leave their relationship with BDS, successfully self-advocate, and accurately navigate the system.</p> <p>The executive director at BDS has come to recognize that the majority of their clients they represent have substantial collateral issues; as their practice grew to accommodate their clients' expanding needs, the more evident these issues became. A primary issue includes inaccurate rap sheets; often times after an individual is arrested and the case is dismissed, the rap sheet inaccurately demonstrates an open case and conviction. Mr. Cains emphasized the damaging effects that imprecise rap sheets can have on the individual's life; an open warrant, case or conviction can prevent the individual from successfully obtaining housing or job licensing. BDS strives to clean up fallacies in rap sheets and to efficiently acquire certificates of good conduct.</p> <p>The majority of convicted sex offenders on Mr. Cains' case load are individuals who have completed their prison sentence and wish to re-enter the community. The process in the state of New York requires a convicted sex offender to have stable housing before they are released; if this is not possible, the individual should be provided with a bed in one of the numerous shelters around the city. However, as a result of past sex offenders being placed in family shelters, legislators determined that sex offenders are no longer eligible for this process. Mr. Cains emphasized that, consequently, all of their clients with criminal history now have perpetual sentences; sex offenders that are sentenced to a minimum of five years are being held in prison beyond their sentence. He argued that allowing this practice to continue allows other classes of crimes to be subjected to the same possibility.</p> <p>One meeting attendee questioned why there was no funding for transitional housing and whether or not it was intentional. Mr. Cains responded that he did not find any evidence of intention and explained that to his belief, legislators who propose laws condemning the worst class of sex offenders offer free publicity; he asserted that the absence of funding is a result of the lack of vision and political courage. Another attendee wondered if it was possible for the search for transitional housing and other preparations for community re-entry can occur before the inmate maxes out their prison sentence.</p> <p>Mr. Owens introduced the DOCCS representative, Michelle Yon.</p> <p>Ms. Yon began by refuting Mr. Cains' claim that it is common practice that individuals are held beyond their expiration date. Per Ms. Yon, generally, inmates serve two-thirds of their sentence when DOCCS presents the CRD, or the conditional release date. It is at this point when the DOCCS initiates the search for a suitable shelter; however, a third of their sentence still remains. Once sex offenders approach their</p>

		<p>maximum prison sentence, they reach a residential treatment facility, or RTF, status. Their transition from inmate to parolee under the RTF status guarantees their right to earn \$10 a day while reporting to parole officers.</p> <p>Because of the imposed perimeter of 1000 feet from schools, there is a limitation on available housing options for previous sex offenders. The challenge in securing available housing occasionally prevents released inmates from immediately gaining access to a shelter. However, once DOCCS can successfully find a shelter that can accommodate the needs of the RTF parolee, they will be moved to the residence promptly.</p> <p>One attendee stated that many clients contact her requesting a concrete date for when they can return home. Members with RTF often succeed in concealing their charge for over 25 years. She discussed that after living in the specified housing area, their charges were revealed and the individuals were “outed.” These individuals prefer to remain in their previous housing options but are unable to.</p> <p>Mr. Cains first questioned the effectiveness of 1000 feet as a deterrent for convicted sex offenders. He argued that DOCCS has the authority to hold an individual for 6 months after the maximum date, and that the conditions under prison sentencing and as an RTF have no significant distinctions; RTF parolees are still subject to every prison rule and regulation. According to Mr. Cains, the only difference is the required sex offender counseling. He argued that these individuals who have completed their sentence and are under RTF status are suffering a perpetual sentence that extends beyond the time period that the courts mandated. It is under the responsibility of policymakers to pass legislation that is within the best interests of the citizens of their state, and Mr. Cains argued that in regards to this issue, the policymakers are exceedingly failing.</p> <p>Mr. Owens concluded the guest presentation by encouraging attendees to present the issue in a panel to policymakers.</p>
9	New Business	No new business presented at this time.
10	Adjournment	<p>The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 pm.</p> <p>The next KCRTF meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, July 22, 2015.</p>