

## **Reentry Roundtable Session (Virtual)**

**Wednesday, September 16, 2020**

**2:00 PM**

### **Attendance:**

Lou Grillo – Kerr-Tar  
Kelly Hundley – Kerr-Tar  
James Johnson  
Joel Rice -  
Zaynah Hunt – Vocational Rehabilitation  
Anita Bennett  
Hal Muetzel – Express Professionals

### **Welcome:**

Anita welcomed all to the meeting. The last meeting was held in February. Lou introduced Hal Muetzel with Express Employment Professionals of Oxford. The council hopes to engage local employers to provide guidance on what local employers need in an employee and how they can assist former offenders in the job process.

### **Old Business:**

In the last meeting (which has been several - months ago) it was discussed to divide assignments amongst the group and get other businesses and partners involved together to provide services and support to the soon to be released population. By working together, partners can offer a “one-stop” process to guide former offenders to needed resources and assist with maintaining and keeping employment.

### **New Start Program:**

James Johnson is the Director of New Start Reentry Program. USDOL issued 20 pathways grants nationally and the New Start Program was the only recipient of this grant in North Carolina. This program serves the counties of Vance, Warren, Franklin, and Halifax counties. Many of the referrals come from the correctional facilities located in Warren and Franklin counties. A list of inmates is obtained from 20-180 days prior to their release. Participants in the New Start program must be:

- 18 years or older
- Convicted of a crime
- Reside in one of the four counties served
- Be 20-180 days prior to release date
- Eligible to work in the United States
- Low Income
- Create a Career and Enhancement plan – steps to obtain goal

The New Start Program Case Manager has a set of pre-release services (for example, assessments of life skills and needs assessments), assisting customers with creating an individual plan to address employment, education, and other goals. Also many supportive services are offered as well such as career readiness, substance abuse, soft skills, GED, and job placement. Job coaches and/or peer support are utilized once the participants have employment. Another service offered by New Start if needed is to provide up to three additional dollars per hour to supplement the hourly wages of participants

During post release, participants are offered supportive services such as referrals to agencies for substance abuse, interviewing skills, job search, and resume assistance. The New Start Case Managers follow customers for one year after they complete the program to ensure that they are on the right track and assist them with any issues or assistance they may need.

Different strategies and/or outreach backing is necessary to pull partners, agencies and employers together so that we can provide the services and support to the former offender population.

- Jamie Cunningham: Have an Open House (virtually) with tables, different services and organizations.
- James Johnson: List for notifications. Some participants with New Start are registered in NCWorks.
- Lou Grillo: Career Centers are having a Regional Job Fair which will involve many employers. It was suggested that on the back of the job fair flyer, to list services on the back of the flyer for attendees.
- Jamie Cunningham: Reentry web page to stay connected with one another (a file on our computers).
- Lou Grillo: look into possibility of having expungement clinics and other resources like that virtually.
- Joel Rice: Cardinal Innovations and Healthcare Housing Specialist - works with homeless and those in danger of being homeless.
- Provide hard copies of flyers with information on them to leave at agencies and businesses for outreach. (Social Services, probation offices, etc.)
- Zaynah Hunt Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor: serves high school age and adults with mental, emotional, and physical disabilities. Lately, the numbers served has decreased since COVID-19.

Lou: the mission of the Reentry Roundtable is for local members and partners working together. There needs to be a lead person of the Reentry Group.

Anita Bennett: Is the Reentry Roundtable a valuable tool and should we do it collectively? Unanimous YES!!!!

What do we need to do to move forward collectively and work with each other? We need to all be at the table.