

## **Notes from Oct. 4 Prison Reentry Meeting (Des Moines)**

### **Ideas and strategies for recruiting staff and volunteers**

1. Social Media
2. Recovery meetings and events in the community
3. Networking (word of mouth)
4. Reaching out to businesses and telling about the organization
5. Indeed website and job fairs
6. Retain staff by having off-site activities, celebrate the small successes, ice cream social.
7. Offer residents/participants a chance to work for organization
8. Churches and colleges (especially interns from colleges/universities)
9. Family members
10. Have a volunteer coordinator
11. Some people want to help but don't know how.

### **Ideas for dealing with burnout or compassion fatigue**

1. Exercise
2. Hobbies
3. Meetings and church
4. Meditation
5. 24-hour break (take time from work)
6. 2 paid days/month for self care
7. Camping
8. Therapy
9. Setting clear boundaries
10. Words of motivation
11. Having luncheons

## **Ideas and strategies for using peer support as mentors or similar**

1. People who are further along in their journey can offer a lot to those newly reentering
2. Create community by bringing people together on a regular basis to connect
3. Look for sober events in community (including AA/NA)
4. Elevate the people who have experience to design and lead programs
5. Start the relationship before a person leaves prison.
6. We need to get volunteers and programs back into the prisons and use phone/email/virtual to start the work with someone in the community.
7. Certified Recovery Coach - CCAR

## **Ideas and strategies for encouraging healthy relationships**

1. Groups on Boundaries, Relationships, Codependency, Enabling
2. Candid conversations
3. Help find a significant supporting relationship (don't put this off)

## **Strategies to Address the Challenges/Issues of Housing**

1. Make a list of bad places to rent from (and find a way to hold property owners accountable for giving people false hope when a person is honest about their past and the property owner still takes application fee knowing they will be denied. )
2. Keep an updated landlord list
3. Build relationships with landlords and landlord associations
4. Mediate issues with landlords
5. Have people create a budget
6. Clean up apartment if it is trashed to save landlord money and work.
7. Community and housing for SO's (those on sex offender registry)

- Farmers or family members that want to open housing for SO's
  - Search on Facebook for groups to help
8. Apply for grants to support housing
  9. Develop clear communication with residents
  10. Establish a routine in your housing
  11. Use your knowledge and experience in determining who fits in your house
  12. Bring in peer during interview for housing
  13. Find an employer to partner with who might buy a house for the employees and have the recovery/reentry program staff and support the residents.
  14. If someone relapses, have a continuum of support so they can temporarily shift to a more emergency shelter environment to work back up to greater independence.

### **Strategies to help with structured time/pro-social/volunteer activities**

1. Creating a 72-hour plan after release
2. List of what needs to be accomplished with clear timeframes
3. Check out St. Vincent de Paul's Immersion Program - navigates employment, education, mentoring, emergency services (clothing, food, hygiene)
4. Unite Us - secure platform for recovery and other resources.
5. Big events that provide lots of activities and volunteering
6. Build partnerships with stakeholders (mental health, free health clinic, etc...)
7. Holistic approach - include plan for phone, food and transportation.
8. Have a list of resources.
9. AA/NA list ready right away.

### **Ways to encourage fortitude**

1. Give all the resources and help individuals create a recovery program
2. Remind people of who they have and what they can do in order to get through
3. Remember that trust is a big issue. Many people inside believe others don't understand and are judgemental.

## **Ideas and strategies for helping with financial skills and literacy**

1. Community State Bank and Freedom Financial Bank will help people get bank accounts even if they have issues in the past. (other banks do this as well)
  2. Financial/Mentor Classes
  3. (Des Moines) Celebrate Recovery, St. Vincent de Paul, Evelyn K. Davis, Iowa Workforce Development)
  4. Credit Karma
  5. Build credit right away with a debit card.
  6. Start financial literacy and coaching right away
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**Also, here are some of the responses to the evaluation question on what people thought is the most needed change to improve prison reentry in Iowa. These ideas are insightful and come from a variety of perspectives.**

- Changes in policy that prohibit people in prison from applying for housing programs, waiver programs, and other assistance while incarcerated. People must be out of prison, homeless or otherwise, before they can even apply for many assistance programs.
- Family and support systems are a necessity. This really opened my eyes as a counselor as I am meeting with clients and we are trying to determine where they need to go and where they will be successful. Getting families involved with their reentry process is huge.
- We need long term substance abuse treatment and mental health inside prisons. People with SA and MHD have high rates of dysfunction and trauma. Trauma is now recognized as the gateway to addiction and MH of all kinds. Until we as a united group start to address the history of these illnesses in individuals we will not have successful outcomes. As you know, it is the MH and addiction that is the root of offenders.

- Housing is a huge need. Places for guys to go, and the necessary staff to run them. Also, more open communication...State, non-profits, etc. The better we do at communicating before and after release, then I believe we'll see more success among II's.
- I think what is most needed to create more success stories are providers/leaders who are open to the multiple pathways of recovery philosophy. When people force others to recover based on their own personal preference, they are playing a dangerous game with someone else's recovery. When people have a voice in how they will recover, then they are more likely to achieve long-term recovery, which leads to people enjoying everything that comes with it, ie: freedom, successful careers, strong relationships, etc.
- From my point of view, I think the participation of faith based organizations, especially churches needs to be greatly increased. As well, I personally think the justice system needs to be altered to help returnees to have some of the roadblocks removed in order for them to succeed.
- I only wish that the DOC had more staff that truly did start to work on a person's reentry the minute they got to prison.
- More housing for re-entry programs, which means more money from donors. So more public information about current success stories from successful individuals to encourage more community involvement.
- Programs that offer mentors, leading to authentic relationships.
- From what I gathered, it starts first with a change agent. We need to connect these individuals with people who care and put forth an honest effort to help them. It almost seemed like those who found emotional support from others were the ones that succeeded the most. Obviously, housing and employment are a very big factor. If we can provide these 2 opportunities to them and combine it with additional emotional support, I think that may help enable their success.
- Partnerships and networking .. The more we can work together and learn more of what others are doing the greater our success. Funding at a statewide level would also be useful ...
- More housing, especially for sex offenders.

- We need to have resources/businesses collaborate more in our areas/counties as a whole. I learned of some resources I had no idea about and if we all had quarterly meetings then we could share those resources and ideas together.
- More collaboration like this day-long meeting. It was great to see so many people from so many different fields gathered in support of Reentry.
- Community support -mentors, recovery specialists, housing assistance, transportation assistance.
- I think collaboration amongst the entities that help an individual coming out of incarceration is a must. Knowing the resources in your area is also helpful.
- I feel that some (maybe most) get lost in the shuffle after they get released as there isn't much follow up and continued assistance. I think there will be more successes if we can get mentors to line up with these men and women leaving incarceration. You already know housing is an issue along with transportation. The employment issue isn't as big as it used to be, but if we can align good housing to transportation to employment and have a mentor to guide... that could create more successful outcomes
- I believe we need to have more opportunities within the prison system to rehabilitate individuals, specifically substance abuse programs. We touch on it sometimes but it is not intense. Another one is having more therapists on grounds to meet with individuals more consistently. A lot of women do not have support on the outside due to their crimes so some of that loss is difficult and people don't know how to cope with that loss.
- A unified consistent standard for what people leave prison with.
- I think the most needed thing to create more reentry success stories is just what we're doing. Meeting and collaborating to make sure we are providing the resources these individuals need and if we as an organization don't, we know where to refer them to.
- Some of the districts are lacking in housing options for women. There are women that are on disability and unable to work so if they can't go to work release and don't have any support, it can be very difficult to find housing and most times they have to discharge their sentence and end up getting dropped off at a homeless shelter.

- Continuation of collaboration with DOC, reentry providers and employers. Housing is always an issue but appears to be moving in the right direction with all the non-profits finding creative ways to create more housing.
- Collaboration between staff and IIs (staff being the primary initial motivator of this). More client focused care / services with valuing positive actions rather than always looking at the bad stuff.
- I think what seems most needed is just more boots on the ground serving those recently released. The time and attention given by mentors seemed a common thread in the success stories. (I know that's no easy issue to address)
- I think that success means different things to different people, but as someone who has been incarcerated and is experiencing the re-entry process- for me success is about seeing examples of organizations and groups that allow former inmates to not only participate in the program but advance to places in leadership.

10/17/23