

Mayor's Commission on Reentry Minutes
September 20, 2021 at 1:00pm

In attendance: Kristin Barker, Cathy Robinson, Gamaliel Torres, Chris Walker, Davida Hatton, Pat Frey, Stacy Rivera, Bridget Downs, Monica Spencer, Sabrina Leonard, and John House

The minutes from the August Commission meeting were reviewed and approved. Gamaliel opened the meeting with prayer.

Keith Mitchell was unable to attend the September meeting. Bridget Downs from Columbus State University attended the meeting at the request of John House. Bridget has been involved in reentry work in the past. Sabrina Leonard also attended. Sabrina used to work at the Columbus Probation office and is interested in working with the Reentry Commission.

The Housing Subcommittee reported they are working with the Housing Authority on getting vouchers designed for individuals returning from jail. This still needs to be approved by the Housing Authority Board of Directors. Then the Department of Housing and Urban Development must also approve the vouchers. The subcommittee is also working with the Data Task Force to understand the numbers of people who are returning to better target post release wraparound services.

The Employment Subcommittee is moving forward with the move to get buy-in from private employers and encourage them to incorporate Ban the Box during their hiring process. We are planning to host 2-3 focus groups with employers. Media, Marketing and More is doing research now and will be running these focus groups for us. Kristin also has a meeting with Rosa Evans and Lisa Goodwin to talk about the results of the transportation survey we conducted through BETTER WORK Columbus. Our intention is to look for solutions to the issues raised during the City Council presentation of the survey results.

The Faith Subcommittee is preparing to start meetings again with the faith community. Monica and Mike continue to work on a survey going out to faith based organizations. Monica will follow-up with Mike to see if this survey has been sent out.

The Home for Good, Continuum of Care (CoC) is trying to broaden the base of landlords who accept clients with criminal records and specifically with more extreme offences. A CoC is a designation within the Department of Housing of Urban Development for the entity within a jurisdiction for a county or counties to lead the work to end homelessness. Home for Good was designated by the City of Columbus to lead our local CoC. Because of this, Home for Good is the access point through United Way's 211 for anyone experiencing homelessness in Muscogee or Russell County. This means that the first step for anyone who is homeless is to contact 211 or complete Home for Good's online intake form. Pat shared a link to this intake form with the Commission.

SafeHouse is taking clients who are in the shelter on job tours with local employers. The goal is to have employers hire clients following these tours.

Members of the Communication Task Force reported that discussion was centered a lot around the data that is needed, where we are going to store the data, and if we need to store the data. They also

discussed the possibility of having some CSU students help with the Commission information online. In order to get assistance from students, we will need to time this appropriately.

Kristin expressed the Data Task Force needs to be focused on the data that is needed, who has that data, and how it is shared. The Communication Task Force should be focused more on how the data is stored and how information from the Commission is communicated out.

During the Data Task Force meeting, the group began to define what data is needed, who is collecting the data, what we need that isn't being collected, and how do we get what we need. We also discussed how to approach needed agreements for data sharing between each on the partner organizations. Kristin and Pat will meet with the Assistant City Attorney to discuss how we should begin to think through this process. A full list of the data we are considering will be emailed to the full Commission for review.

John shared that the City Attorney and the City IT office may be able to help with data storage since we are concerned about security and privacy. Once we know exactly what we want and how we are going to get it, we should reach out to have this conversation. Pat shared this would be a good idea and a neutral location to consider.

The meeting was dismissed at 1:40pm.

Our next meeting will be on October 18, 2021. We will meet virtually on zoom.