



Meeting Summary March 17, 2021

Members Present: John Fleming, Jeff Cooke, Amanda Newton, Dan Goyette, Angela Rea, and Mane Martirosyan,

Guests and Staff Present: Faith Augustine, Tyler Dennison, Libby Mills, Bradley Bringardner, Yvette Goodwin Jamison, Dorian Woodard, and Marty Johnson.

I. Welcome/Call to Order

Libby Mills opened the meeting, after Patti Echsner (Chair) notified the group that she would be unable to attend. Libby welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting and reminded all attendees to stay on mute throughout the meeting unless presenting or speaking.

II. Approval of the February 17, 2021 Meeting Summary

The February 17, 2021 meeting summary was unanimously approved as submitted.

III. Opportunity Network Updates

A. Reentry Workbooks

Libby Mills introduced Tyler Dennison and asked him to provide an update on the Reentry Workbooks. Tyler informed the group that 250 workbooks are currently being printed by the Kentucky Correctional Industries and should be delivered within the coming week. After the workbooks are printed, they will be delivered to the Louisville Metro Department of Corrections for dissemination. Each workbook delivered to Metro Corrections will include an informational flyer from Indiana University Southeast. The flyer will provide information on the research study and how to contact the research team once individuals are released from custody. Tyler reported that the workbooks will be disseminated at other locations, such as Goodwill Industries, but this would not be included in the research study. Additionally, Tyler advised that he is following up with several jails across the state about the workbooks and hopes to have news about that effort soon. Tyler stated he would be happy to provide a PDF copy of the workbook to anyone in the group who wanted one. John Fleming asked the group if there was a plan for working with incarcerated individuals who were operating at a lower reading level than others. Tyler stated that the original plan involved going into the institutions and working with individuals on a one-on-one basis, but the pandemic prevented that from happening. He stated that he hopes to have the opportunity to do this in the future, which would benefit those individuals who have difficulties reading and writing.

B. Membership Opportunities

Tyler then discussed potential membership opportunities within the Opportunity Network. The network has been in operation for over two years and the original term limit for members was two years. Tyler stated that he has been reaching out to members about whether they want to continue with their membership. Many have said that they would like to remain on as a member and others have not been in communication with the group. Considering this, it is likely that there will be several membership vacancies in the coming weeks. Tyler encouraged the group to reach out to anyone who may be interested in the work of the Opportunity Network. The group is looking for members who are passionate about this type of work and who will be active in the group. Tyler said that he would be happy to speak with anyone who is interested and provide them with more information. An informational flyer and member application were provided in the meeting packet. Tyler stated he hopes to have new members on board by the next meeting in May. Additionally, Tyler informed the group that if there is anyone who feels they are unable to continue their membership duties, they can reach out privately to Tyler and discuss this.

C. Kentucky Department of Corrections Reentry Mentor Initiative

Libby introduced Dan Goyette to present information regarding the Kentucky Department of Corrections Reentry Mentor Initiative. Dan began by mentioning that the Mentor Initiative is currently in operation at three prisons across the state. The program involves pairing mentors from the community with incarcerated individuals who will soon be released from custody. Dan stated that many incarcerated individuals don't have a support system in place upon release and can benefit by having a positive influence in their lives. Dan reviewed the qualifications for becoming a mentor including being 21 years or older, being affiliated with a recognized organization, and completing the mentor application. The application includes a criminal background check, but Dan stated that a criminal background does not necessarily disqualify someone from becoming a mentor. Additionally, those selected as mentors will undergo training provided by the Department of Corrections. Under normal conditions, the mentor and the mentee would meet at least once per month, but this is not possible currently due to the prisons being closed to visitors. Dan stated that the program has been successful thus far and hopes the initiative can expand to other prisons soon. Currently, communication between mentor and mentee is limited to mail and JPAY services, but Dan says that video chatting may soon become an option. Dan encouraged the group to pass along information and an application to anyone who may be interested in participating in this program. Dan informed the group that so far, everyone who has been matched with a mentor has not returned to prison. John Fleming asked the group if they had any current numbers regarding the number of individuals who are released from prison into the Louisville area each year. Tyler stated that he did not have those exact numbers, but he would like to obtain that, or similar statistics, if possible.

IV. Member Updates

Libby then opened the meeting for any members who wanted to provide updates, but no members had any updates to share.

V. Adjourn

Libby thanked everyone for attending the meeting and reminded everyone that the next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, May 19, 2021. All meeting will remain virtual until further notice. With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.