



Meeting Summary February 15, 2023

Members Present: Dennis Ritchie (Chair), Goodwill Industries of Kentucky; Jonathan Wood, Metro Office of Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods (designee for Quinones Corniel); Amanda McElwain, Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice; Yvette Goodwin Jamison, Robert Jamison Ministries; Meka Sylvester (designee for Mane Martirosyan), Metro Corrections; Matthew Aaron, Kentucky Department of Corrections; Samantha Mills, Goodwill Industries of Kentucky; Heather Hammergren, Center for Employment Opportunities; and Michael Ferraraccio, Metro Public Defender's Office

Guests and Staff Present: Tyler Dennison, Metro Criminal Justice Commission; Ben Harris, Simmons College of Kentucky; Phoebe Embry, KentuckianaWorks; Tori Nelson, Kentucky Department of Corrections, Dr. Brian Schaefer, University of Louisville, Millie Dee Stevens, Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program; and Adam Haley, Goodwill Industries of Kentucky

I. Welcome/Call to Order

Dennis Ritchie, Chair, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone.

II. Approval of the December 2, 2022 Meeting Summary

The December 2, 2022 meeting summary was unanimously approved as submitted.

III. Presentation

Simmons College of Kentucky's Second Chance Pipeline Ben Harris, Director of Academic Operations, Simmons College of Kentucky

Dennis introduced Ben Harris, Director of Academic Operations at Simmons College of Kentucky, to speak about the school's new Second Chance Pipeline, which will provide incarcerated individuals an opportunity to complete college coursework. Ben opened his presentation by noting that individuals who receive post-secondary education are 42% less likely to re-offend, which is a big reason why Simmons wanted to pursue this initiative. Ben explained that Simmons will be utilizing \$1.3 million in federal Pell Grants to fund the Second Chance Program, with the goal of 200 participants. The program will launch at two pilot sites this spring: Luther Lockett Correctional Complex in LaGrange and North Point Correctional Facility in Danville. Ben stated that the program will utilize a hybrid model with in-person instruction and online coursework. Participants will have access to tablets featuring Securus Lantern, a secure learning management

system that draws content from a network of reputable academic providers. Additionally, participants will have access to the Microsoft Office programs.

Ben noted that to qualify for the Second Chance Program, participants must meet the same academic requirements of all Simmons College students, including possessing a high school diploma with a cumulative final grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher or high school equivalency. Additionally, participants must qualify for federal Pell Grants and have at least six months continuous good behavior at their respective institution. Ben further noted that preference will be given to those individuals who are five years or more from parole eligibility or serving out their sentence.

During the pilot program, Simmons College will be offering coursework in Religious Studies, General Studies, Restorative Justice, Sociology, and Business Entrepreneurship. Ben stated that Simmons College will be waiving all application, technology, and other fees. Ben noted that the spring program will feature 40 participants between the two prisons. In response to a question from Meka Sylvester regarding whether Simmons will offer any additional courses or expand in the future, Ben stated that staffing is a challenge currently, but this could change in the future.

Dennis informed Ben that a goal of Goodwill Industries is to have an Excel Center inside a Kentucky Department of Corrections (DOC) institution and that there could be a partnership between Simmons College and Goodwill to make this happen. Ben concluded his presentation by asking that anyone interested in learning more about the Second Chance Program or potentially serving on Simmons College's Community Advisory Board, to reach out to him via email at BHarris@Simmonscollegeky.edu.

IV. Opportunity Network Updates

A. Reentry Housing Workgroup

Tyler Dennison provided an update on the Opportunity Network's Reentry Housing Workgroup, which has met three times since launching in November. Tyler explained that the goal of the workgroup is to increase much-needed housing opportunities for the community's justice-involved population. The workgroup has three goals it is currently pursuing, including continuing to network with likeminded individuals and organizations, identifying funding opportunities to support the work of the group, and launching a pilot project within Louisville Metro by the end of 2023. Tyler explained that during the workgroup's most recent meeting in January, members elected to focus on a public education campaign aimed at local landlords, housing providers, and the public. Workgroup members have discussed creating a short informational video that could be used by the Opportunity Network and its partners to create awareness for the issue of reentry housing. Additionally, the workgroup has discussed utilizing the Kentucky DOC's Reentry Simulations to increase awareness and education within the community. Tyler explained that these simulations help highlight the barriers and struggles the justice-involved population face daily. Tyler noted that the Reentry Housing Workgroup is

scheduled to meet again on February 23rd at Goodwill's Resource Center, located at 909 East Broadway.

B. Reentry Workbook Research Studies

Dr. Brian Schaefer provided an update on two research studies the Opportunity Network is involved in which utilize the Network's Reentry Workbooks. The first study, which is ongoing inside the Louisville Metro Department of Corrections, involves providing pre- and post-surveys to inmates utilizing the workbooks. Additionally, surveys are given to a control group who are not using the workbooks. The goal of the study is to determine how effective the workbooks are for justice-involved individuals attempting to reacclimate to society. Dr. Schaefer noted that thus far, 35 pre-surveys and 9 control group surveys have been collected. The study will continue into June and final research findings will be provided to the Opportunity Network shortly after.

Dr. Schaefer explained that the second research study will gauge the effectiveness of the workbooks being used in conjunction with Goodwill Industries' Reintegrating Individuals Successfully Everyday (RISE) Program. Participants in RISE will be given a workbook at the beginning of the program, the contents of which closely mirror the curriculum of the RISE Program. Dr. Schaefer noted that pre- and post-surveys will be administered digitally to RISE participants across the state, with the goal of surveying 250 people. Participants will be given a \$20 gift card after completing each survey. Dr. Schaefer and Tyler have already met with the Goodwill Site Coordinators and digital copies of the workbook have been provided to the coordinators for their review. The research study is tentatively scheduled to begin on February 27th.

C. Legislative Workgroup

Tyler provided an update on the Legislative Workgroup, which convened on November 30th in preparation for the 2023 session of the Kentucky General Assembly. During that meeting, members heard from Shelby Somervell, with Greater Louisville Inc., and Jon Dye, with the Kentucky Chamber, regarding those organizations' legislative priorities.

Tyler explained that the Legislative Session began on January 3rd and will run for 30 days. During the session, the Legislative Workgroup will be tracking all reentry-related legislation. Tyler highlighted some of these bills, including:

- House Bill 21 - This bill would allow an individual without a fixed, permanent address to submit a form signed by a shelter, health care facility, or other social service agency attesting to the applicant's residence for the purpose of issuance of a renewal operator's license or an initial or renewal personal ID card.
- House Bill 97 – This bill would amend the Constitution of Kentucky to automatically restore the voting rights of persons convicted of certain felonies upon completion of their imprisonment, probation, or parole and automatically

restore their civil rights five years after completion of their imprisonment, probation, or parole.

- House Bill 228 – This bill would prohibit employers from considering or requiring disclosure of prior criminal history as part of the initial job application.

Tyler noted that because the Legislation Session is such a short one, it is unlikely that there will be major legislative changes pertaining to reentry. He reminded everyone in attendance that the Criminal Justice Commission tracks all criminal justice-related legislation and provides this list via email each Friday during the session. He asked anyone interested in receiving this list to reach out to him or Faith Augustine via email.

V. Adjourn

Dennis thanked everyone for attending the meeting and reminded members that the next scheduled Opportunity Network meeting is Wednesday, May 17, 2023 at 12:00pm. Dennis called attention to the revised Opportunity Network meeting schedule that was included in the meeting packet. He explained that moving forward, meetings would be occurring quarterly, rather than bi-monthly. Dennis stated that the schedule was changed to better accommodate members' and guests' busy schedules. Additionally, with the various workgroups meeting consistently, he felt it was no longer necessary to meet so often.

With no further questions or comments, the meeting was adjourned.