

Milwaukee Reentry Council

Wednesday, February 24, 2021, via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Attendees: Conor Williams (Community Advocates), Mandy Potapenko, (MCJC), Patrick Hughes (Badger Institute), Tom Reed (Public Defender's Office), Kimberley Quetschke (AdvocateAurora), Ken Gales (US Attorney's Office), Carl Wesley (Center for Self Sufficiency), Artis Landon (WCS), Jamie DeJesus Sr. (Innovative Educational Solutions), Ruben Gaona (2nd Chance Wisconsin), Joan Plumley (DOC), Joseph Moore (UWM), Jenni Sevenich (Progressive CHC), Tom LeBel (UWM), Frederick Nelson (Employ Milwaukee), Niel Thoreson (DOC), Karen Coy-Romano (Taskforce on Criminal Justice Reform), Myeesha Young (Progressive CHC), Stephan McMillan (US Courts), Gretchen Scholdt (WI Justice Initiative), Timothy Ehlinger (UWM), Wendel Hruska (Project Return), Terrece Irving (Milwaukee Jobs Work), Amanda Smith (Project RETURN), Dawne Herbert, Claire Hackett (HUD), Kaelin Rapport (Northwestern University), Shannon Ross (TheCommunity), Sylvester Jackson (EXPO), Marisola Xhelili Ciaccio (Marquette), Patricia Gorence (Retired), Tiodolo Delagarza (Milwaukee LGBT Community Center), Janet Robinson (Alma Center), Alyssa Doman (WPF/CJC), Eli Rivera (ShyftFly), Julie Grace (Badger Institute), William Lipscomb (US Attorney's Office), Katie Lynch (Benedict Center), Ron Schroeder (EXPO), Christine Apple (DOC), Maya Thomas, Joseph Ellwanger (Project RETURN), Bri Perez, Laurie Tenpenny (DOC), Tai Minor (AdvocateAurora), Terri Strodthoff (Alma Center), Hogan Bey, Robin Lee, Robert Thibault (PAM), Connie Kostelac (MCW), Paul Geenan, Aldira Aldape (Americans for Prosperity Foundation), Alyssa Spies (Marquette), Alimmit, Erich, Chantell Jewell (HOC), Dashal Young (WCS), Dimitri Topitzes (UW-Milwaukee), Shannon King (Peace of Heart), Martice Scales (Alma Center), Orlando Owens (Ron Johnson's Office), Gwendolyn Luckett (America Works), Lisa Vlach, Jamie Reif (Wellpath), Joel Cole (DWD), Deborah Beuttler (DOC), Kim Tardin (WCS), Ella Dunbar (SDC), Peggy West-Schroeder (EXPO), Ylanda Glover (Alma Center), David

- 1) **Welcome** - Conor Williams, meeting facilitator, called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm.
- 2) **Presentation: Smart Reentry Outcome Evaluation - Alma Brothers** – Dr. Terri Strodthoff, Executive Director with the Alma Center, and Dr. Connie Kostelac, Medical College of Wisconsin, began the meeting by providing an overview and report on the outcome evaluation of the Smart Reentry grant funded program “Alma Brothers.” The Alma Center led the project, which provided comprehensive reentry services and support that began 6 months pre-release and continued upon release. Services were delivered by peer guides and family support specialists. The initial design tracked 88 participants through the program who had medium or high recommended supervision level and who were scheduled to be released between January to April 2019. The initial outcome evaluation suggests potential positive outcomes for the intervention group. More information regarding the evaluation can be obtained via Conor Williams or any of the presenters.
- 3) **Networking and Dialogue** – Meeting attendees were divided into six small discussion groups to generate conversation related to three critical areas of reentry: 1) employment & entrepreneurship, 2) programming, and 3) housing. Group leaders took notes and provided a summary with meeting organizers for future action and incorporation into meetings ahead.
- 4) **Overview of Badger Institute Brief on Community Supervision Policy Changes** – Patrick Hughes (patrick@badgerinstitute.org), Researcher with the Badger Institute, presented a on his “[Reforming Community Supervision](#)” brief, published in January 2021, in response to DOC’s community supervision policy changes.
- 5) **Reentry, Training and Employment Presentation** – Jamie De Jesus, Innovative Educational Solutions Institute, Inc. (IES), provided an overview of the training and employment program offered through IES. Jamie also noted that there are 6 openings in a transitional living program (TLP) that offer a wide range of support services. Jamie can be contacted at jdejesus1iesi@gmail.com or via phone (414) 269-9820, Cell: (414) 364-5726.
- 6) **Returning Citizen Pilot Employment Program** – Ms. Kim Quetschke, Talent Acquisition Professional with Advocate Aurora, shared an overview of AdvocateAurora’s new returning citizen pilot program focused on expanding employment

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opportunities to those who have been justice involved and/or are returning from incarceration. The program is designed to help individuals find jobs in healthcare and provide a supportive environment when beginning their employment with AA. Kim and her team are hoping to partner with other organizations in the community and seek out employee referrals to their program. Advocate Aurora's careers page can be accessed here - <https://careers.aah.org>; Kim Quetschke can be reached at Kim.quetschke@aah.org.

- 7) **“The Way Out” Mobile Support App & Service Provider Dashboard** – Eli Rivera, co-founder of “The Way Out,” gave an overview on the anti-bias employment platform that launched at end of 2020 and is aimed to break the cycle of incarceration through connecting individuals to living wage jobs. Eli also demonstrated the newly released MyWayOut app, which provides real-time communication between returning citizens, reentry service providers, and additional support service providers. The app is gamified and incentivized to encourage users to complete their programming goals. The app is currently seeking service providers and sponsors. Any individuals interested in learning more can visit [TheWayOut website \(https://www.twout.org/\)](https://www.twout.org/) or contact Eli Rivera or Ruben Gaona (erivera@twout.org, rgaona@twout.org).
- 8) **Reentry Housing Virtual Town Hall** – Conor Williams and Joseph Moore promoted an upcoming virtual Reentry Housing town hall on Thursday, March 18th 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm on Zoom. The purpose of the event is to grow the number of private sector landlords willing to rent to previously incarcerated individuals and provide education on the need for expanded reentry housing.
- 9) **“Fresh Coast, Fresh Start” Reentry Employment & Training Program** – Conor Williams shared that Cream City Conservation is recruiting individuals to participate in a 6-month paid training program focused on green infrastructure and includes industry recognized certifications. Cream City Conservation has established partnerships with MMSD, Viola, Milwaukee Water Works for permanent employment opportunities following the training period. August Ball can be contacted at august@creamcityconservation.org. It was also noted that there is a specific desire to employ returning citizens.
- 10) **Public Comment and Any Other Business** – Participants highlighted the need to use person-first language when describing individuals who have histories with justice system involvement. There was discussion in the chat throughout the meeting. One participant highlighted the use of the term “returning citizens,” as it is accurate in describing persons who are reentering the community from incarceration. Additional thoughts can be sent to Conor or Mandy at reentry@milwaukeeecjc.org.

Ella Dunbar, SDC, noted they are offering free tax preparation for those who made under \$60,000 in 2020. She will send a flyer to Conor for distribution to the group.

Peggy West-Schroeder shared there is work happening on a bill related to widening the opportunity for expungement in the State of Wisconsin. She will send information to Conor for further distribution.
- 11) **One-Word Evaluation and Adjourn** – Attendees were encouraged to submit a one-word meeting evaluation into the chat. Conor Williams adjourned the meeting at 3:30 pm. The next Reentry Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 24, 2021 at 2:00 to 3:30 pm via Zoom.