



Milwaukee Reentry Council

Wednesday, April 22, 2020, 2:00 pm

Virtual Meeting – Video + Phone

Meeting Minutes:

Attendees: Conor Williams (Community Advocates) Wendel Carter (Project Return) , La’kesha Reid (CFSS), De’shawn Ewing (Parenting Network), Karen Brooker (Community member), Fred Nelson (Employ Milwaukee), Michael Hass (Empower MKE), Yolanda Glover (Alma Center), Pastor Joe Ellwanger (MICAH & Project Return), Ken Gales (US Attorney’s Office), Bill Lipscomb (US Attorney’s Office), Adam Procell (Project Return), Janet Robinson (Alma Center), Claire Hackett (HUD), Mandy Potapenko (CJC), Tom LeBel (UWM/Board Project Return), Jamal Washington (BMO Harris), Terri Strodthoff (Alma Center), Nazir (Ibrahim House), Jay Tucker (WI Community Services), Julie Grace (Badger Institute), Natraj Shanker, Peggy West (EXPO), Lars Brown (DOC), Tom Reed (Public Defenders Office), John Eshun (Community Advocates), Constance Alberts (Bank One), Aldira (Americans for Prosperity), Jarome Pitchford, Jamie Reif (Wellpath), Niel Thoreson, Sean Wilson (ACLU), Ruben Goana, Liz Swartz (Wellpath), Abigale Nelsen (Wellpath), Stephen McMillen, Unity Temple, Capliph Muab-El (Breaking Barriers), Patricia Uduh (Teacher), David Pate (Researcher), Dashal Young (WCS), Sequanna Taylor (County Supervisor)

1) Introductions - Conor Williams, facilitator for the Reentry Council, called the meeting to order at 2pm. Those present proceeded with introductions.

2) Update on COVID-19 Response and Incarceration – Earlier in April, the Milwaukee Community Justice Council released a [document](#) that outlined Milwaukee County’s collaborative effort to prevent and limit the transmission of COVID-19 in the local jails and across the justice system. Mandy Potapenko provided an overview of that process and the ongoing effort to ensure the safety of those in the custody of Milwaukee County, as well as public safety overall. Milwaukee County recently released a daily, online dashboard that shares updates on COVID-19 within the jail and/or HOC. It can be [accessed here](#). To date, Milwaukee County has reduced its combined jail population to 1300, which is down 28% since January 2020, over 40% since 2015, and over 60% since 2008.

Niel Thoreson shared measures the Department of Correction is taking to ensure the safety of their staff and persons in their care. Niel stated most DCC staff are now working remotely. Only a small portion of individuals on supervision are required to report into the DCC offices; most are being monitored through home visits that adhere to social distancing best practices and telephonic check-ins. More information from the Department of Corrections can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Niel noted MSDF’s current population is 650, which is a 40% reduction from their average daily population.

3) Reentry Programs – Conor noted that a number of reentry programs, including Circles of Support have transitioned to offering virtual/online programming. Conor encouraged attendees to share any virtual offerings with him they can be distributed to the broader mailing list. One participant asked about domestic violence offerings. Terri Strodthoff from the Alma Center shared they are currently working with around 360 individuals who have histories of trauma and violence through remote means. The Alma Center is working to increase their remote offerings and will be launching expanded virtual support groups next week. Terri also noted they are not the only organization working to combat domestic violence. More domestic violence resources can be found through a new collaborative website [here](#).

4) Project and Partner Updates:

- a. **Alma Center Smart Reentry Program “Alma Brothers”** – Terri Strodthoff and her staff provided a brief update on the Alma Brother’s project.
- b. **Wisconsin Decarceration Project - “Home to Stay Online”** – Conor Williams shared an update on the collaborative, long-term, vision of the WI Decarceration Project led by Dr. Michael Carriere and others at MSOE. In the interim, a small group has worked to launch an e-resource guide in lieu of in-person home to stay events. The website is <https://www.mkehometostay.org/>



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- c. **Circles of Support, Peer Support, and Leadership Circles** – Wendel Hruska of Project Return shared of their positive transition to virtual meetings and engagement. They are examining expanding their circles and support groups to daily offerings, given the interest level. This use of technology will likely continue beyond the the pandemic. Updated offerings and flyers will be shared with the group once details are finalized.

5) Task Force/Ad Hoc Committee Updates:

- a. **Healthcare** - Lars Brown noted that most of network are healthcare providers so were unable to attend last meeting, however, the focus of getting those released connected to healthcare. He noted Badger care and raising awareness of inability to use Medicare when coming out of correctional institutions and the Medicare Reentry act.
- b. **Home to Stay** – The group was reminded of the new website being built to support online reentry resources – www.mkehometostay.org. Contact hometostay@milwaukeeecjc.org to have your resources added.
- c. **Housing**- None noted.

- 6) **Partner Updates** – Connor welcomed participants to share updates related to changes in their work and programming in response to COVID-19 pandemic.

7) Public Comment and any Other Business

- Fred Nelson, Employ Milwaukee, indicated there has been reduction in employers hiring in recent weeks. Most employers who are hiring are requiring applicants to apply online, which has been a barrier for many. Employ Milwaukee will be hosting a virtual job fair with WOW & DWD on May 7.
- Adam Procell, Partners in Hope, shared a personal story of supporting an individual in need of COVID-19 testing. Jerome P noted that Issac Coggs offering free test and resources for COVID-19.
- The Parenting Network information: Parent Helpline: 414-671-0566
- Peggy West shared about WISDOM's effort to encourage the Governor to move forward with expanding Compassionate Release and end crimeless revocations within DOC.
- Lakesha Reid noted that CFSS paid classes 18-24 and more programs for youth, fatherhood program, JUMP program (getting a job) Made note flyers have been sent out. WCS is sending out information about hosting sessions.
- County Supervisor Sequanna Taylor joined the meeting toward the end. She indicated interest in making time to get back to any questions from the group. She shared her perspective on the HOC's effort in reducing the impact of COVID-19 on inmates and in the overall population. She receives daily updates and will put information out on social media as she is able.

- 8) **One-Word Evaluation and Adjourn** – Conor Williams concluded the meeting by asking all participants to share a one-word evaluation of the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 27, 2020, at 2pm. Log-in and call information will be distributed with the agenda.