

This document is the result of 5-7 months of meetings and research by the 10 State Reentry Council Collaborative (SRCC) workgroups and presents draft recommendations. The SRCC welcomes your comments and feedback on these draft recommendations. **Note: Budget numbers in these recommendations are estimates only and have not been verified.**

All feedback will be reviewed and considered. Once the final recommendations are approved by the SRCC, they will be submitted to the NC General Assembly and the Office of Governor Roy Cooper.

In submitting your feedback, please include the following information:

- Your name
- Organization (if applicable)
- Workgroup and recommendation to which your feedback applies

We welcome any feedback submitted prior to the deadline, but all comments must be emailed to Irene Lawrence at [irene.lawrence@ncdps.gov](mailto:irene.lawrence@ncdps.gov) by 5pm on October 31st.

## **SRCC Faith/Community Based Organizations Workgroup Recommendation #1**

### **Recommendation Summary**

This workgroup recommends planning and hosting a statewide Reentry Conference in late February/early March 2019.

### **Recommendation**

This workgroup is planning a statewide Reentry Summit, which will take place in late February/early March 2019 to convene reentry stakeholders, Local Reentry Councils, members of the faith community, and volunteers to share information about reentry, network, share best practices, and get involved in reentry at their local level.

We are hoping that this conference becomes an annual event. It is not intended to be an event specifically relating to the goals of this administration; we hope it continues in perpetuity and that it grows into a 2- or 3-day conference in future years.

This conference must be culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of Hispanic/Latinx residents returning to their communities. To that end, reentry workshops should be available in both English and Spanish, and the needs of a racially diverse prison population should be addressed in the Diversity in Reentry afternoon session.

Planning for the conference includes designing and distributing flyers, developing the conference schedule, reaching out to speakers and guests, managing registration and billing, and planning conference logistics.

### **Stakeholders**

NC Clergy  
Conference Invitees  
Governor's Office

### **Type of Action**

Conference Planning

## **SRCC Faith/Community Based Organizations Workgroup Recommendation #2**

### **RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY**

Volunteering in prisons has proven to be a successful tool to those who are incarcerated and seeking assistance in rehabilitation, reentry, employment, housing and establishing a successful transition home, especially for families seeking restoration and healing as a result of their loved one's incarceration. Volunteers often provide an alternative solution to behavioral patterns and can help the person develop a level of trust. Most people who are incarcerated often find their temperament change as a result of the love and support they receive from volunteers. In alignment with SRCC's premise that a stronger partnership between Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice (DACJJ) personnel and volunteers who wish to serve the incarcerated, our recommendations include more transparency about the application and approval process for individuals must go through to serve inside prison facilities, as well as more information about the programs for which volunteer involvement is welcome.

### **BACKGROUND**

"Each year, more than 700,000 people are released from state and federal prison, while another 9 million people cycle through local jails. Statistics indicate that more than two-thirds of state prisoners are rearrested within three years of their release and half are reincarcerated. High rates of recidivism mean more crime and pressure on an already overburdened criminal justice system" (Caporizzo, 2011). Currently, in NC there are 36,991 people incarcerated, 87,712 people on probation and 12,200 on post release or parole (NCDPS).

At present, the NCDPS website contains no guidance for people wishing to consider volunteering inside facilities. Research has identified promising practices from other states for onboarding volunteers that are interested in working in correctional facilities. Most states begin the process of volunteering in prisons on their websites by providing an application form or point of contact. Some states provide additional information about requirements, expectations, and a description of the process. **The best example found of online guidance was in Oklahoma, which is summarized with other states below.**

All applications to volunteer require a background check. This could usually be performed by state or national center/agency, and submitted to whomever collects volunteer materials in that state. All states required training, although the source of the training varied. Some had online modules, some had courses run by the state Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice, and others held trainings specific to the facility, or a mix of each of these requirements. Other kinds of vetting like age, commitment, ethics and residency requirements, as well as relationship limitations, were also handled on various levels. However, a model that vets applicants on the state departmental level for statewide standards such as age, general rules/ethic training, and background checks, seemed standard and functional in most states, vetting applicants before deferring them to facilities or local volunteer coordinators.

Some states can share vetting information between facilities by having a Volunteer Coordinator that collects this information. Oklahoma's system enables a volunteer to complete registration through an online account, which could be used multiple times to sign up for different facilities and programs.

This varied from state to state, some volunteers were directed to contact local coordinators or directly to facilities. However, most states at least provided a start to the application process on their state website. This was typically an application form and summary of requirements. From there, some states collected these materials through the DACJJ, to later be assigned to a facility, whereas others provided facility-specific contacts to whom they could send materials. In states such as Colorado, applications, vetting, and general training were done by the State DACJJ, and volunteers were sent to facilities afterward for orientation. More detail on this model can be found in the State-Specific Models section below.

## **INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS**

### **Arizona**

To start the volunteer process, an applicant would submit a resume to an open position on the state jobs website. These volunteer positions are listed among other state employee positions, so the website recommends filtering the list with the keyword ADC. This submission is reviewed, and the applicant interviews with staff from the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC), and then completes application materials. A "volunteer assignment" is determined at this point. Then they are vetted through a background check, drug test, and TB test. All potential volunteers then complete 3 online training modules from ADC.

In Arizona, much of the volunteer process, vetting and training goes directly through ADC, and not the local facilities.

<https://corrections.az.gov/volunteer-opportunities>

### **Colorado**

Colorado DACJJ volunteering webpage made a specific request for group/organizations to apply to volunteer. Individuals from these groups, however, would undergo an application, vetting and training process with the state. First, an applicant would fill out the online application, undergo a criminal background check, and either be accepted or denied at that point. If accepted, the applicant would then schedule training conducted by DACJJ, which is conducted in-person at various locations. This "Basic Volunteer Training" includes an introduction to the department, professionalism and communication training, and training on working with people in prison, including sex offenders. Additional training is available for specific kinds of volunteers, such as mentors. After this, the trainee attends an orientation and tour of the facility, and then their information goes to the prison warden, who signs off on completion of the process and grants final approval.

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cDACJJ/volunteer-opportunities-0>

### **Georgia**

According to the Georgia Department of Corrections, anyone interested in volunteering starts the process by contacting the Facility Volunteer Coordinator at the location they intend to volunteer, who provides an application. The application, background check, and training is completed through the specific facility's volunteer coordinator. This includes an on-site orientation and training. The background check is completed through the Georgia Crime Investigation Center or the National Crime Investigation Center. The state provides a volunteer I.D. and Locator Card.

<http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/Divisions/InmateServices/Reentry/Volunteers.getInvolved>

### **Maine**

In Maine, volunteers are mostly recruited by the department heads of prisoner programs. However, anyone who is interested is directed to contact the Deputy Warden of Prisoner Services of the facility they would like to volunteer at. The Deputy Warden provides application materials.

<https://www.maine.gov/corrections/facilities/msp/MSPVolunteerMemo.htm>

### **Massachusetts**

The state website for Massachusetts direct interested volunteers to contact the Volunteer Services Division with an application directly through mail or by phone. The website also provides an informational booklet:

<https://www.mass.gov/files/DACJuments/2017/10/02/Program%20Description%20Booklet%20October%202017.pdf>

Volunteering is also coordinated by two organizations: Our Prison Neighbors (OPN) and Concord Prison Outreach (CPO).

Concord Prison Outreach is a 501 (c)3 nonprofit that works cooperatively with Massachusetts Department of Corrections, serving a total of 9 facilities across the state. CPO recruits and trains volunteers to serve in programs aimed at educating and providing skills to people in prison so that they will be prepared to return to the community. They run programs for education, vocation, emotion, arts/humanities, and families. They assist people in prison to complete certifications and pass exams. According to their website, "The Department of Correction considers us to be one of their most valued partners, and other states are now looking to CPO to help replicate our model elsewhere." Their website also includes information on how to begin the volunteering process.

<https://www.concordprisonoutreach.org/volunteering/get-started-volunteering/>

Our Prison Neighbors was modeled after Concord Prison Outreach. OPN recruits and advocates for prison volunteers. The main differences between the two seems to be OPN's focus on non-violence, and differences in their programs. On their website, different programs and opportunities are listed, as well as contact information for their Director to get involved. According to their website, OPN is "no longer a 501(c)3 nonprofit" and has broadened their mission to include reform advocacy.

<http://ourprisonneighbors.org/>

## **Oklahoma**

The website for volunteering for Oklahoma Prisons has an easy to use search tool that allows volunteers to find opportunities based on location, facility or activity. Once they choose a volunteer position, there is a “sign up” button that leads them to a page dedicated to that specific opportunity, with details and contact information. The volunteer would then view an online schedule where they could sign up for a shift. In order to sign up, they need to have an account registered on the site. To register for an account, the volunteer completes ten steps which include agreeing to a background check, entering personal information and qualifications, and proof of citizenship. This way, one user account holds all necessary application and vetting information, which can be used multiple times across different volunteer openings.

<https://ec.samaritan.com/custom/1481/>

## **Utah**

In Utah, there is an online Volunteer Application form that is reviewed directly by the State Department of Corrections, for various volunteer programs they offer. Vetting, including background checks, state identification, and proof of age are all submitted after this form and reviewed by DACJJ. Religious groups and service projects are also encouraged on the state’s DACJJ volunteering page to contact the state Volunteer Coordinator. There is a list of needed projects such as quilting and sheet music.

<http://www.cor.pa.gov/How%20Do%20I/Pages/Become-a-Volunteer.aspx>

## **Vermont**

In Vermont, an interested applicant would send via mail their completed application to the Local Volunteer Coordinator to begin the process. Then, they would interview with the Community Resource Coordinator of Volunteer Services Coordinator. The same coordinator would then hold a training and orientation session. The volunteer would attend a site-specific training for a correctional facility.

<http://DACJJ.vermont.gov/volunteer>

## **Washington**

In Washington, the volunteer application is mailed directly to the facility the volunteer would like to attend. If they do not know which they want, it can be sent to a volunteer services email address.

<http://www.DACJJ.wa.gov/corrections/programs/volunteer.htm>

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

DACJJ

Local Reentry Councils

## **BUDGET**

There is minimal cost associated with these recommendations. We believe the increased understanding of the roles of volunteers will result in higher numbers of volunteers at facilities across the state. After website changes to begin the application process online are

implemented, vetting and approval can be scheduled in a systematic way to maintain open communication between NCDPS, local facilities and volunteers.

**TYPE OF ACTION**

Executive

**TIMELINE**

Immediate

### **SRCC Faith/Community Based Organizations Workgroup Recommendation #3**

In order for effective change to take place within the prison system, there needs to be consistency in the volunteer training program at the state and federal levels. Recommendations include:

- a. Volunteer training should occur four times a year.
- b. Program staff will provide blue *and* orange cards at the end of *each* training.
- c. Program staff will explain in detail the observation process, so community volunteers can accumulate their recommended 8 hours of training.
- d. The program supervisor will provide sufficient information around training and blue cards
- e. Program staff will make themselves available to answer any questions around training and scheduling (ex. arranging community volunteer passes, etc.)

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice (DACJJ)  
Local Reentry Councils (LRCs)

#### **BUDGET**

There is minimal cost associated with these recommendations. We believe the increased understanding of the roles of volunteers will result in higher numbers of volunteers at facilities across the state. After website changes to begin the application process online are implemented, vetting and approval can be scheduled in a systematic way to maintain open communication between NCDPS, local facilities and volunteers.

#### **TYPE OF ACTION**

Executive

#### **TIMELINE**

Immediate



## **SRCC Faith/Community Based Organizations Workgroup Recommendation #4**

### **Recommendation Summary**

This workgroup recommends that every facility/prison have a permanently funded Chaplain position, to include a permanently funded Chaplain for the Transitional Aftercare Network (TAN).

We also recommend that all residents have access to religious services and religious study in their native language. If the Chaplain at their facility doesn't speak their native language, Chaplains who are Spanish-speaking need to be willing and able to move between facilities to serve all the Spanish-speaking residents by holding Spanish/bilingual services and bible studies.

### **Background**

Chaplains play an important spiritual and emotional role in the lives of residents. They work directly with the residents by providing religious services and accommodating their faith group needs within the scope of NCDPS policy. Their work enhances residents' personal and spiritual development, improves their commitment to ethical and moral growth and accountability, and improves individual preparation for reentry. Chaplains interface with residents, with volunteers both inside and outside the facility, and with those who lead reentry courses. Chaplains are present to plan and/or provide re-entry courses and training for residents and volunteers.

We know that reentry starts the first day of incarceration and that faith is a significant component in lowering recidivism. Therefore, it is also essential that correctional institutions allow religious services and bible studies to be given in the language of the incarcerated. We cannot recommend spiritual support for select residents; we must have such support for all residents.

### **Recommendation**

This workgroup recommends that every facility/prison have a permanently funded Chaplain position, to include a permanently funded Chaplain for the Transitional Aftercare Network (TAN), and that all residents have access to religious services and religious study in their native language.

### **Budget**

Still under development

### **Type of Action**

Executive

Legislative

### **Timeline**

FY 2020 and beyond