



State Reentry Council Collaborative Quarterly Meeting February 11, 2025

Leslie Cooley Dismukes, Secretary, NCDAC, addressed the attendees with a warm welcome and expressed her profound appreciation for their unwavering commitment to advancing reentry initiatives across the state. In her remarks, Secretary Dismukes highlighted the critical importance of ongoing collaboration among the council members, various government agencies, and community-based organizations, which are essential for fostering the successful reintegration of individuals returning from incarceration. She emphasized that the Council's efforts have gained significant momentum and visibility, marked by the progressive outcomes being achieved in key areas such as reintegration into the community, workforce development, and housing stability. These accomplishments are a testament to the shared dedication and hard work of all partners involved. Secretary Dismukes took a moment to acknowledge and commend the tireless commitment of those actively working in the field, recognizing their vital role in creating a supportive environment for individuals during this transitional phase of their lives. Secretary Dismukes reaffirmed the administration's steadfast resolve to establish a fair and inclusive system that supports reintegration, focusing on ensuring that no individual is left behind. The professionals engaged in this work were lauded not just for their case management skills but for their essential roles in relationship-building, advocacy, and navigating the complex behavioral, health, and social needs of the individuals they serve. Additionally, the importance of developing strong community partnerships and a shared sense of responsibility for reentry initiatives was a focal point of her speech. By fostering robust partnerships, stakeholders can more effectively address the multifaceted challenges encountered by individuals reentering society. Secretary Dismukes encouraged all participants to engage in meaningful cross-agency networking throughout and after the meeting. This collaboration is vital for pooling resources, sharing knowledge, and ultimately amplifying the collective impact on the community through enhanced support systems designed to facilitate lasting change and positive outcomes for those on their journey to successful reintegration.

Maggie Brewer, NCDAC Chief Deputy Secretary of Rehabilitative and Correctional Services & George Pettigrew, NCDAC Deputy Secretary of Rehabilitation and Reentry, provided an in-depth update on the ambitious Reentry 2030 Initiative. This comprehensive,



long-term initiative aims to fundamentally transform the reentry systems throughout North Carolina, focusing on enhancing rehabilitation efforts and supporting successful reintegration into society for individuals leaving the correctional system. A key highlight of this initiative is the upcoming launch of the Reentry 2030 Dashboard, an innovative public-facing tool set to be released in July 2025. This dashboard is designed to systematically monitor and evaluate progress towards several core reentry objectives, ensuring that stakeholders can track relevant indicators effectively. Among the critical metrics included are employment placement and retention rates, housing stability, recidivism rates, and overall success in community reintegration. By presenting this data in a user-friendly and transparent format, the dashboard aims to foster public accountability and support informed policy-making, ultimately guiding continual quality improvements across the reentry landscape. Additionally,

George Pettigrew, NCDAC Deputy Secretary of Rehabilitation and Reentry, announced that the next Joint Reentry Council (JRC) meeting is scheduled for March 27, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. This meeting will provide an important opportunity for council members and stakeholders to engage in discussions related to reentry strategies and initiatives. North Carolina has gained national recognition for its leadership in reentry reform, thanks in large part to its integrated approach characterized by innovation, rigorous data analysis, and a steadfast commitment to equity. This model not only positions North Carolina as a pioneer in developing effective reentry systems but also serves as a blueprint for other states looking to enhance their own approaches to reintegration. Council members are strongly encouraged to remain actively engaged and well-informed as North Carolina moves forward towards establishing a more coordinated and effective statewide reentry strategy, fostering a climate of collaboration and continuous improvement in the realm of rehabilitation and community reintegration.

Guy Buckner, Special Projects Administrator, NCDAC Rehabilitation and Reentry, presented on the implementation and expansion of reentry simulations throughout the state. These simulations are designed as immersive, role-based experiences that enable participants to navigate the complexities encountered by individuals involved in the justice system during their initial month after release. The simulation comprises four timed



segments, each corresponding to one week of the reentry process, requiring participants to accomplish essential tasks such as securing housing, obtaining employment, accessing healthcare, and adhering to supervision requirements. In 2024, these simulations were effectively conducted in several correctional facilities, including Pamlico Correctional Institution. The feedback received from both incarcerated participants and staff was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing a heightened awareness of the structural barriers and emotional challenges associated with reentry. Notably, in 2025, the Department of Adult Correction made history by hosting its first reentry simulation within a women's facility, which attracted over 100 participants and was graced by the presence of the newly appointed Secretary of DAC. The department is dedicated to further expanding this initiative both within correctional institutions and community settings, aiming to foster empathy, identify gaps in services, and enhance reentry planning processes.

Frankie Roberts, Executive Director of Leading Into New Communities (LINC), Inc., and Michelle D. Gunn, Deputy Director, provided an extensive overview of their organization's innovative initiatives in reentry programming. LINC operates a Transitional Living Campus, known as the M.E.R. campus, which offers 25 beds in conjunction with comprehensive wraparound services that encompass job readiness training, educational assistance, mental and physical healthcare, and substance use treatment. The partnership with Cape Fear Clinic facilitates the provision of on-site medical services that address both chronic and acute health issues prevalent among underserved populations. Through the NC FIT Program, LINC has successfully connected hundreds of formerly incarcerated individuals to health coverage, enrolling 187 participants in ACA insurance and 52 in Medicaid, thereby ensuring continuity of care after release. Additionally, LINC engages in the Healthy Opportunities Pilot (HOP), a Medicaid-funded initiative that delivers non-clinical supports such as housing navigation, food assistance, and transportation. As of the present date, this program has aided 352 clients through 839 service referrals. In the domain of behavioral health, LINC's Cognitive Behavioral Intervention (CBI) program has specifically targeted individuals in opioid recovery, achieving a remarkable 97% engagement rate among 134 clients served. Workforce development constitutes another pivotal focus area for LINC. The Employment Bootcamp program has effectively prepared 27 justice-involved individuals for the job market, with 23 participants achieving successful completion. Furthermore, the LINC Anatomy Program trains individuals to become Peer Support



Specialists and Community Health Workers, exhibiting completion rates of 93.2% and 84%, respectively. The organization also facilitates coordination efforts for Local Reentry Councils, having served 166 clients, of whom 60% obtained employment and 92% secured stable housing. Lastly, LINC manages seven residential properties that provide 18 units of permanent and affordable housing, thereby addressing a critical barrier to successful reintegration.

Maggie Brewer, NCDAC Chief Deputy Secretary of Rehabilitative and Correctional Services, underscored the critical role of collaborative networks and partnerships among all stakeholders in the reentry process. During the discussion, participants emphasized that successful outcomes often stem from initiatives that integrate several key components: individualized case planning tailored to the specific needs of each individual, peer mentorship that fosters personal connection and support, trauma-informed care that addresses the psychological challenges faced by returning individuals, and continuity of services that ensure access to necessary resources and support systems after release. Additionally, the dialogue delved into various strategies aimed at enhancing collaboration between governmental entities and community-based organizations, recognizing that a united approach can significantly bolster reentry efforts. Participants explored innovative methods to broaden the reach and impact of Local Reentry Councils, focusing on ways to deliver comprehensive services to rural and underserved areas that currently lack adequate Reentry Resource Services. The conversation highlighted the importance of identifying gaps in existing services and developing holistic programs that can better support individuals as they reintegrate into their communities. By fostering these connections and expanding service availability, stakeholders aim to create a more effective and inclusive reentry framework.

Maggie Brewer, NCDAC Chief Deputy Secretary of Rehabilitative and Correctional Services, engaged the audience in a public question-and-answer session. Attendees posed inquiries regarding program eligibility criteria, funding mechanisms, inter-agency referral processes, and logistical challenges. Key topics included the necessity for increased transitional housing options, methods for scaling peer mentorship initiatives, the improvement of employment training pipelines, and the utilization of reentry simulations as educational tools in both institutional and public environments. Chief Deputy Secretary Brewer expressed profound gratitude to all staff, partners, and presenters for their time,



expertise, and commitment to the mission of reentry reform. She acknowledged the progress achieved through collaboration and innovation while also recognizing the obstacles that remain. Attendees were encouraged to sustain their engagement, continue exploring innovative strategies, and commit to collective actions that prioritize dignity, opportunity, and equity for all returning citizens in North Carolina.

Leadership expressed appreciation to all attendees for their participation in the meeting, after which the meeting was formally adjourned.