

Barrier Busters Network Action Group

Barrier Buster August 26, 2009 Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Announcements:

- a. Welcome New Members
- b. John Dingell's Foreclosure forum
- c. POWER has moved to 3810 Packard; Suite 250; they are now in the Office Center near MAP and other agencies.
- d. AADL: Has flyers for Kids, adults, and teens for programs and computer classes.

III. Minutes and Agenda Approval: The Meeting Minutes from June 26, 2009 are approved. The agenda for today is approved with no additions.

IV. New Business

a. **Mary King, Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative Coordinator** (washtenawmpri@gmail.com)

Mary sends a formal apology for missing our last meeting due to a calendar snafu.

Outline of presentation:

Overview of program
Impact on MDOC
Housing Program information

Overview:

- The program began in 2005 because the number of people in the prison system was at an all time high and growing. At the time it started, Michigan was one of the only states that spent more money on incarceration than education.
- 1 out of 2 people went back to prison after being released at the time of start of the program.
- Michigan is in the forefront of prisoner reentry. We are one of the only states in the country that has a statewide reentry program instead of a local-based program. Although it is a statewide program, the implementation is all done in a local way.
- Each MPRI sight has its own steering team (board of directors)

MPRI Vision: When people get released from prison, they will be able to be productive members of society.

Three phases of the program:

1. First: The prisoner gets assessed at the moment they enter the Michigan Department Of Corrections (MDOC). This assessment helps MPRI determine what programs that each individual prisoner will need.

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2. Second: “In-reach”: MPRI identified prisons that are within reach of the communities that the prisoners are from. MPRI does workshops and video conferencing with the parole agents while the prisoner is still incarcerated.
3. Third: Involving community agencies into the parole process.

Local Statistical Data:

- MPRI receives between 250-350 total released prisoners/year. The program has experienced more prisoners overtime, so this year, they were on the high end of that range of released prisoners.
- 92% of re-entering prisoners are male. The prisoner breakdown by municipality is below.
 - ~35% are from Ypsilanti Township
 - 20-25% are from the City of Ypsilanti
 - 20% are from the City of Ann Arbor
 - The last 20% (roughly 20%) are from the rural communities
- The MPRI kept these percentages

MPRI is NOT an agency. They are contractors that work with agencies such as:

- POWER, Inc
- Workskills Corp.
- MI Works
- Lillies and Asso.
- Dawn Farms
- Hazelet Crosby Robinson
- MRS
- CSTS
- Washtenaw literacy
- AADL

Impact on the MDOC / MPRI Update:

As a result of Statewide MPRI work, here are some statistics on the MDOC and MPRI:

1. The number of “max outs” has decreased in MI after it has been increasing for a decade. (A “Max Out” is a person who has completed their entire sentence in incarceration without ever receiving parole or early release). This reduction in max outs is a good thing for MPRI due to the fact that prisoners who are released from prison due to a max out are generally more likely to return to prison for committing another crime. While those who are released through parole and the MPRI are more likely to adapt better to the community.
2. The reasons for parole have decreased.

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3. The Michigan Prison population went down by 5%.
4. Crime rates are going down in MI (even with increased unemployment – this is a very important statistic!).
5. There is current legislation seeking approval to get prisoners approved by the parole board no longer than 120% of their first out date. There is also pending legislation to make no prisoner have to stay longer than 9 months before their release / max out date. Currently by law there are no early releases in Michigan. The average amount of time that people spend in Michigan prisons is 127% of their first out date; while this percentage is ~85% in other states. When people get “Maxed Out” of prison, they get no resources at all and they also have no parole, thus making it very easy to recommit crimes and return to prison.
6. MPRI has been able to close prisons.

Housing Programs Information:

1. Housing First program with MSHDA: Through this program, MPRI is able to:
 - a. Find landlords that are willing to rent for to MPRI clients.
 - b. Provide rent subsidy.
 - c. Help clients get jobs and move into their own space, paying 50% of their rent.
 - d. House 100% of people coming out thus far.
 - e. Change the clients’ outlook on life. About 31% of the clients move out of the housing programs and get serious about staying out of prison. Many move back home with their families.
 - f. Reduce recidivism. The group that had the highest return to prison rate went from 26% to 19%.
2. Housing Supportive Services Coordinator – MISH program
 - a. Houses 20 participants.
 - b. Only had one person return back to prison thus far.
 - c. This population of people are the worst of the worst
 - d. They have substance abuse history and mental illnesses. MPRI works to get these people the proper treatment and help (relying heavily upon local agencies).
 - e. This program had only 2 people discharged for program non-compliance.
 - f. The clients are retaining their mental health with this program and with the community organizations involved.
 - g. The program has 2 women and 14 men
 - h. MPRI has helped the clients redevelop their family relationships. While many of them previously lacked family relationships, some family members come around now.

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Q&A

1. Can people join in the MPRI program on their own? Or is it just through the parole board?
 - a. The parole board makes the decision for now. However, if people come to MPRI within 6 months of maxing out, they can also join the program. Those that max out then join the program have typically had the least success because they usually just want the housing resources and not the entire program structure. In the future, MI might change the rule.
2. Great work MPRI!
3. What about non-Washtenaw county residents who want to end up in Washtenaw County upon release? Can they join the Washtenaw MPRI program or will they have to go somewhere else?
 - a. If someone is coming out of prison and can find a housing situation that is not MPRI in a community, then they can come to Washtenaw County post-incarceration. However, they cannot opt to come to Washtenaw County for our MPRI program if they did not commit their crime here. They have to either have committed the crime in Washtenaw County or have family here that they can live with post-incarceration.
4. What is the best place to refer people to the Washtenaw County MPRI?
 - a. Use the flyer that Mary passed out.
 - b. Here is the quick summary of how you get into MPRI Washtenaw County: **get out of prison**. MPRI works with people six months post release and those released on parole. One exception is the employment program through MI Works!. Anyone can come to the MI Works! meetings and get workshop assistance. But the non-MPRI clients will not get gift certificates at each workshop. Interested people do not need to call in advance. They can just show up at MI Works! on Monday and Tuesday afternoons from 2 – 4 pm.
5. How can we check to see if someone was in MPRI?
 - a. Call the parole agent.

b. MI Works! Program:

1. They are a customer resource center that assists with job research
2. JHET Program (referral by DHS only)
3. MPRI, Child Care Network, etc. referrals to MI Works
4. Youth Program Under the Workforce Investment Act
5. Corporate services program
6. MI Works has an array of services. It is an extensive list of services

Q&A:

1. Are there any jobs available now?
 - i. It depends on their qualifications.

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2. Are walk-ins welcome?
 - i. Yes. We give them the resources they need. We help people with unemployment even though we are not an unemployment office.
3. Are there funds available for people who are looking to go back to school?
 - i. Yes.

No worker Left Behind Program through MI Works!

There is an orientation Monday and Friday for the program. They talk to people and give them the same folder that was passed out today.

No Worker Left Behind identifies the steps that they want people to go through to qualify for the program. It is not a funded program. It is a set of steps that people go through to be qualified for the Workforce Investment Act. The program is a list of steps. The first page of the JSTS program checklist (Job Search Training Services – mandatory orientation for everyone who comes to Michigan works) is the most important. That list includes:

1. People come in to get training to allow them to go back to school or to qualify for new jobs.
 - a. Register for the MI talent bank
 - b. JobFit Assessment (online site where MI Works! posts information and gets a career information report that identifies an order of certain careers that match client's interests and job goals.
 - c. TABE test – 6th grade level or higher reading test. Everyone takes it, regardless of degrees obtained. If you do not pass it, you can retake it. They have workshops to help people in math and reading to help you pass.
 - d. Everything else is documentation (driver's license, social security card, etc).

Eligibility for NWLB (workforce investment act):

- Anyone unemployed is eligible to apply.
- If you are working but make less than \$40,000/year, you are eligible to apply.
- But if you are married, then the incomes are combined.

Website information resource sheet: use this for consumers to help them get into the orientation and to help them decide what training that you want to do. **Case workers at MI Works! do not work with clients to help them pick what kind of training they want.** They want people to know by the time they get to them. Once you know, contact Sandra Lloyd.

MI Works! tries to set up trainings that are in demand. They want people to complete things within the 2 years of the training.

www.mycareereducation.org: gives a list of schools that MI Works! are paired with. And also gives contact information. Pell Grants for school will be applied before the MI Works! funding

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MI Works! does have money for “supportive services” to help people pay for the trainings. It is about \$10,000 for the course of 2 years.

Q&A:

1. Can people start the program if they do not have everything on the checklist?
 - a. Best to start with the checklist because the program can't start for that person until they have the basic steps done.
2. Everything is online based. What efforts do you have for people who do not know about computers? (example of MBL's client)
 - a. We are working to use funding for computer purchases. As for training, not much was mentioned.
3. Is the MI Works! money coming from a federal stream?
 - a. Yes. It was named a few different things beforehand.
4. MRS Site?
 - a. Yes. It is Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-10 and the woman's name is Mary.
5. Do you do job matches for people who have skills but just don't have a job?
 - a. Yes. Instead of using the money for training at MI Works, they can use the funding for “on the job training” through an employer. We also have “business training.”

V. Old Business:

None.

VI. BB Emergency Unmet Needs Fund Update

Andrea passed out graph to show the difference between last year's funding and this years funding. Last year was fairly constant. In the last three months, we have spent substantially more than we did last year. This means that we have been going through our funding very, very quickly. We have spent about \$75,000 in the past 3 months alone. We are trying to be very creative with our funding. But overall, we are moving through the funding a lot faster than we have in the past. Sustainability is becoming an issue due to the economic situation. But overall, we are in good shape.

VII. Case Consultation: Referrals and Interagency Collaboration

Referrals:

1. Are you able to get in touch with the agency that refers clients to you?
 - a. Not always. Because you can't call about clients without a ROI. But Barrier Busters ROI's work for all agencies, so this may not be as big of an issue.

Verification of funding from other agencies: This is happening more frequently now. Why? Clients tell agencies incorrect information.

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Urgency is a huge issue. Sometimes you can't open another case with a client because you don't have a case with a client already.

There is not a consistent way of knowing who does and who does not have funding at any given time. Is there a coordination system that can let us know how things work at each agency? Can we make one? Is there a rubric? The listserv is supposed to be a resource for this. Can we have a hierarchy tree diagram to pass along? With the requirements for each agency under each type of work that the agency does. A system like this would help us fill in the gaps and to direct people accordingly or to not direct them at all. We have a communication problem between agencies that *work* with clients. Hours of business matter too.

Is there enough time to deal with each urgent situation without letting things get shut off?

ETCS is out of money during the summer. BB is like the only major funder during this time.

BB funding is being asked for by the clients. Can we have a handout on what it is for agencies to distribute about the purpose of the Barrier Busters Network?

If ETCS is out of money, then clients are referred to SOS, FID, Salvation Army, and DHS most of the time.

Salvation Army is **not** out of funding and neither is FID. But FID is focusing on needs other than housing right now. So if someone calls about those issues, we refer them to DHS, SOS, etc.

JFS Lisa Keefauver has ~40 questions. They include:

1. Which agencies do holds? (Lots of agencies). JFS has been getting holds placed on people's account by calling DTE and sitting on the line for hours.
2. Who's doing the BB requests? If an agency is the 5th agency, should they be the ones that apply for the funds? How do you know when you make the request?

What are the member agency's obligations for the case management role? We need to have this discussion for an entire meeting.

Please think about this and have that conversation with the person at your agency who would know more about this at your agency if you are not the main person so that we can discuss it more at our next meeting. Thanks!

Meeting Adjourned at 3.05PM