



Workforce Development Board
County of Middlesex

Reentry Employment Committee
June 27, 2017 – 9:30 AM

Present:	Amy Bellisano, Julio Briones, Ileen Bradley, Roseann Bucciarelli, Luis Fernandez, Alan Fialka, Barbara Koonz, Melyssa Lewis, William Lim, Yvette Molina, Angel Perez, Peter Ruffini, Miriam Ruiz, Donna Scalia, Kathy Shaw (via phone)
Staff:	Shamara Gatling-Davila, Kevin Kurdziel, Diane Seavers

1) Welcome/Introductions

Kevin Kurdziel

- a) Kevin Kurdziel greeted those in attendance and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2) Review & Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Kevin Kurdziel

- a) There were no questions/concerns about the minutes, so Kathy Shaw made the 1st motion to approve and Amy Bellisano the 2nd.

3) Middlesex County Jail Pre-Apprenticeship Project

Kevin Kurdziel

- a) Kevin has had numerous meetings with the Middlesex County Jail warden in regards to the Agriculture Pre-Apprenticeship. This Pre-Apprenticeship Pilot Program will start by serving 18-24 year olds in the county jail. As a result, Youth funding will be used. In brainstorming a way to execute the training, equipment/supplies needed and spacing it was clear additional funding would be needed. About two weeks ago the committee working on this had a meeting with Assistant Commissioner of Department of Labor, Patricia Moran. A request for \$75,000 was made to help assist with the cost of this pre-apprenticeship program including a Hoop House. According to the last update received on the request, the Commissioner of the Department of Labor, Aaron Fichtner, conditionally approved the request and now it is waiting with the fiscal officer for review. If approved, the funding may come from the Commissioner’s Discretionary funding. Having this program will be a great foundation to use if applying for grants in the future to serve the ex-offender population.
- b) As of right now, no direct businesses are lined up for when ex-offenders are released. Once the funding has been approved, steps will be taken to identify businesses. Also being worked on, is identifying what credentials can be obtained by completing this pre-apprenticeship training.
- b) In addition, about two months ago Kevin met with the ASAP Committee as well. Ideally, ASAP will spearhead this pilot program. ASAP, as explained by Barbara, is Adult Substance Abuse Program. It is an in-house education and reentry focused program. The population served is less violent and are in need of recovery, training reentry skills and education.
- c) As further explained by Ileen, the program is a 90 day substance abuse treatment and recovery program. For those that are being released from jail, they will leave with their road to recovery in progress. For those that are not being released, they too have the concept to recovery started as they continue their time in jail.

4) One Stop Services at Jail

Kevin Kurdziel

- a) After speaking with Brian Ferguson, the county warden Chief of Staff, the plan is to start offering One Stop Services inside the county jail like resume writing, soft skills training and an overview of what services the One Stop can offer after being released. Establishing our presence early on will inform those incarcerated of community resources and reduce the number of people that are not helped for lack of knowing about the One Stop Career Center. The goal is to start this during the Fall.
- b) This initiative will make the Office of Workforce Development more competitive for federal grants. The goal is to eventually have a One Stop Career Center located inside the county jail.
- c) This committee could benefit from having a representative from Parole attend meetings.

5) Metrix Training Software

Diane Seavers

- a) Metrix is an online program that offers about 5,000 courses and about 150 of those courses can lead to credentials. There are no prerequisites to take the online courses. Intermediate computer skills and high speed internet is needed to fully take advantage of Metrix. Those interested will have to complete a two page application, so they can be added into our database system. The approval of Metrix is pending for the July Middlesex County Freeholders meeting. If approved, September 1, 2017, is an expected start date for the program. Each license is valid for six (6) months. Each person will have a total of six (6) months to complete an online course that has been started. This online training has unending potential. The program will be marketed to clients needing the training, staff development and also to our community partners. The details on where testing will be held for the Nationally Recognized Credentials from the particular online trainings is still being worked out. Two current options are a computer room inside the One Stop Career Center or using Certiport.
- b) Approval of the six (6) in demand occupational sectors for Middlesex County are scheduled for the July Middlesex County Freeholder meeting. Each Career Counselor will specialize in particular sectors and will work closely with the business department to identify job placements very early on in the client's process.

6) HSAC Reentry Presentation Fall 2017

Kevin Kurdziel

- a) Human Service Advisory Committee of Middlesex County will host a Prisoner Reentry Presentation in September/October. This will be used to inform everyone about the resources available for the reentry population. This will also be an opportunity to educate others on the barriers faced by those in this population.

7) Transitional Jobs

Kevin Kurdziel

- a) The transitional job policy is waiting for the July Freeholder Meeting vote. Transitional jobs is new to WIOA. According to the regulations, local areas are able to use up to 10% of the available Adult/Dislocated Worker funding for special populations. Reentry is inclusive of the special population. This new policy will allow Middlesex County Office of Workforce Development to subsidize up to 100% of the wages for employees for up to six (6) months. Currently, the wages will vary between minimum wage and \$12 per hour. There is a possibility the wages can go as high as \$14 per hour depending on the career sector. There will be very little strings attached. The employer does not have any requirements pass the initial six (6) months. Hopefully, the company will see the value of this employee during the six (6) months and as a result, decide to keep the employee. It would be great to start this in August.
- b) Those that take advantage of the transitional jobs are still able to receive an ITA pending all other eligibility requirements. The goal is to actually train most of the people prior to them going through the transitional jobs. For those that do not require additional training, transitional jobs can be a starting point. This also leads into career pathways. If a client completes training/receives a credential, works in the field of training for at least a year, and decides he/she wants to obtain the next level of training/credential to excel in that career the client will be able to return for more training. The details and eligibility requirements are still being worked on by the State since directives are coming from the State. Soon more people will hear the phrase 65 by 25, which means

the State of NJ would like to have 65% of the adult population to have a high school diploma, recognized credential or a college degree by the year 2025.

8) Misc.

- a) The Office of Workforce Development is still waiting on the Notice of Obligations from the state for funding. The Work First Notice of Allocations are in and funding was cut by \$360,000.00. Since the Work First Counselors will be responsible for case management functions from the state as well, two more counselors may need to be hired. Hiring of additional counselors will help clients get served in a timely and efficient manner.
- b) William Lim, NJ Reentry Corporation based out of Jersey City, informed the attendees the City of Perth Amboy has asked him to host a Reentry Seminar similar to the one previously held in New Brunswick; with the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office and Damon House. This workshop will be held on July 18, 2017, in the Alexander Jankowski Community Center at 6pm. Not only will he discuss expungement, but other services available for those that currently do not or will not qualify for expungement in the future. Some of those services include: Employment, drug treatment, housing, Medicaid, Driver's License Restoration and One Stop Career Center Services.
- c) The libraries have received funding to offer career prep services and career connections training in house. Since it appears people are more comfortable visiting libraries than this building, presentations will be offered at libraries to inform people about the One Stop services.
- d) Amazon is adding two new locations in Middlesex County, Edison and Cranbury. They are hiring for full-time and part-time positions. Warehouse positions start at \$13.50 an hour. There is a \$1 shift differential for the night shift wage of \$14.50. The Edison facility is expected to open early Fall. Informational and recruitment sessions are being held every Friday through September for the Edison location. Currently, the One-Stop Career Center is helping Amazon research possible options for drug testing locations. The informational and application/assessment has not yet been determined for the Cranbury location. These facilities are expected to run 24 hours and have onsite training for the positions needed. Amazon is also working with a NY based company, Fedcap, to work closely with DVR in Middlesex County to hire those within the disabled population.
- e) Julio Briones, Answer Man Specialty Service, is a self-proclaimed personal crisis manager. He was previously incarcerated and has started his own business to help those in need. He does Reentry coaching for people and their families on how to relate to one another, deal with divorce, and prepare for a positive reentry from the time of arrest. He also helps to setup services for drug rehab as well. This is a private-pay service. He hosts lectures and workshop for non-profit organizations. He is the co-author of a book entitled, Stress Free Divorce.
- f) Working with the company Glopak has been put on hold due to the owner being ill.
- g) The One Stop Operator has procured. Craig Schlosser, from the Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce, will serve as the liaison between the Workforce Development Board and the One Stop Manager. He will be onsite 16 hours per week.
- h) Rutgers Visitor Center will host the Middlesex County Economic Development Department Summit on September 8, 2017. The Middlesex County rebranding initiative is still underway since the public launch on June 10, 2017 in Roosevelt Park.

9) Adjournment

- a) Diane Seavers made the 1st motion and Barbara Koonz the 2nd to adjourn the meeting.

The next meeting of the Reentry Employment Committee will be Tuesday, September 19, 2017.

