



**Workforce Development Board**  
County of Middlesex

**Special Populations Committee**

**March 19, 2019 – 9:30 AM**

Present:	Amy Bellisano, Julio Briones, Roseann Bucciarelli, Luis Fernandez, Melyssa Lewis, Yvette Molina, Miriam Ruiz, Donna Scalia, and Marc Schweitzer
Guest & Staff:	Elizabeth Conte, Kelly Robinson and Pearl Thompson MaryAnn Bossio, Shamara Gatling-Davila, Kevin Kurdziel, and Diane Seavers

**1) Call to Order/Introductions**

**Kevin Kurdziel**

- a) Kevin Kurdziel greeted those in attendance and asked everyone to introduce themselves.
- b) The approval of minutes was skipped due to this being the first meeting of this restructured committee.

**2) Overview of the Restructured Committee**

**Kevin Kurdziel**

- a) A Middlesex County Needs Assessment was completed. The Humans Service Advisory Committee will use this assessment to determine the need of services.
- b) The Reentry Committee was formed as a result of the Middlesex County Task Force ending a few years ago. The Reentry Committee was formed to focus on the issues the population has as it is vital to the community.
- c) At the end of April, the Task Force will be reinstated. The meetings will be held at this One-Stop; possibly conference room B.
- d) This Special Population Committee will focus on various populations; in addition to reentry: Individuals with Disabilities, Veterans, individuals receiving Public Assistance, Homeless and other.
- e) This committee will be charged with making recommendations to the WDB and also making sure those that fall within special populations are actually given priority to services.
- f) Amy Bellisano will be the chairperson for this committee.

**3) Returning Citizens**

**Kevin Kurdziel**

- a) Kevin and Diane met with Warden Cranston and Chief of Staff, Brian Ferguson. Some point after April 1<sup>st</sup>, at least one staff member from the Office of Workforce Development will go behind the walls and deliver general services such as presentations and resume workshops. This will not only familiarize those incarcerated with some of the One-Stop services, but also allow them to get a head start for when they are released.
- b) Once the jail’s newly hired Social Worker gets settled in, the details will be worked out.
- c) Kevin and Diane were able to meet with the new Director of Community Service for the Parole District Office. The Lieutenant and some staff members were able to meet with them as well. Bridging the gap with our office and parole can make a huge difference in the amount of people served.
- d) Carmen Mercado will be the single point of contact for the reentry population. She will be able to direct people to the appropriate agency/services.
- e) Julio is a few weeks shy of completing his parole obligations. He is truly a success story. He has a consulting company and has been a true asset to this committee. His company will now focus on trainings and helping employers understand their employees that are of the reentry population.

**4) Individuals with Disabilities**

**Kevin Kurdziel**

- a) A person with a disability doesn’t automatically need to be referred to DVR. Staff training is needed to ensure the proper assessments are done to know the barriers.
- b) Some referrals are not met because some people do not want to work with DVR due to the stigma.

- c) Some people truly need the additional services DVR can offer instead of going straight to work.
- d) A barrier that is happening more often is Mental Health Illness that becomes present later on in the process. Some students do not disclose having an issue and as a result, they are not referred to DVR and they do not get the additional services.

**5) Veterans**

**Kevin Kurdziel**

- a) There aren't any Veteran reps on this committee yet.
- b) A goal is to get more Veterans to use the One-Stop and the services offered here.
- c) The staff at the One-Stop could benefit from receiving training on Veteran services, resources and barriers.
- d) The GSETA Institute will be used for staff professional development. One of the areas will be priority clients in which Veterans are.
- e) The GSETA Institute will also offer trainings on how to deal with today's issues facing the county and state.

**6) Public Assistance/Homeless**

**Kevin Kurdziel**

- a) The WorkFirst NJ staff navigates the clients to their work activities. They track the amount of hours the clients have for their various programs.
- b) The state looks at how many of the required participants are actually participating in their program/work activity. The federal guidelines state at least 50% of the participants should be participating in the program/work activity.
- c) In the past, Middlesex County's highest participation rate was 28% on any given month. No county in NJ has gotten to 50% of participation; for various reasons.
- d) The state puts a lot of emphasis on the percent. The needs of the clients should drive the services.
- e) Due to barriers some of the clients have, it is challenging to keep the WFNJ clients in their work activity. All referrals are from the Middlesex County Board of Social Services. They are initially placed in Job Search for 4 weeks. Job Search is Monday through Friday 9am-4:30pm. They receive mock interviews and are encouraged to attend job fairs and recruitments. If the clients do not obtain employment during the four weeks, they are placed in a 6 month CWEB Program.

**7) Potential Members**

- a) If you can think of any other people that would be a great fit for this committee, please let me know. s.
- b) The meeting months for this committee will change so that it better aligns with the other events going on in the office. The next meeting will be in May and every three months after.
- c) Mornings work better for this committee.

**8) New Business**

- a) A proposal has been submitted by the Township of Woodbridge, the Office of Workforce Development, Middlesex County College and other county agencies for the NJ DOL Opioid Pathways to Recovery Initiative. This 18-month initiative is expected to be up and running by April 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. At this point that goal is unrealistic.
- b) We look forward to getting a decision soon on who will be awarded the grant that was open to six counties.
- c) There is a job fair tomorrow at the Old Bridge Municipal Complex from 10am-1pm. There will be about forty employers present.

**9) Adjournment**

**The next meeting of the Special Population Committee will be Tuesday,**

**May 14, 2019, at 9:30am.**

**Conference Room B**