

Highland Community Collaboration Council
In Person
Meeting Minutes
December 13, 2021
9:30am

The Highlands Community Collaboration Council had an in-person meeting on December 13, 2021.

Welcome and Introductions

Chris opened the meeting at 9:30 and members introduced themselves. He asked for additions or corrections to the agenda. There were 16 members in attendance today. A sign in sheet was completed.

Review and Approval of November 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes:

Matt motioned and Linda seconded the motion. All in favor. The minutes are approved

Guest Speakers:

Stan Rose: (Cognitive Counselor, Bland Correctional Center)

Stories of Recidivism as told my inmates @ Bland Correctional Center via virtual.

Inmate number one was incarcerated for four years. Upon release went to community college and was required to travel 20-minutes to see his PO. Travel was an issue and he soon got back into his old ways. He has 8-months left on his current sentence. His plan is to move in with his father for an extended period of time. He will enroll in outpatient treatment. He is encouraged to enter into a plan of recovery and get a sponsor upon release. The 12-step programs were recommended. He is further encouraged to work closely with is PO and work it the best he can. He is encouraged to see Leroy on Main Street in Radford. DARS in Christiansburg is another resource. Inmate says his first release was viewed as a time to get out and have some fun. He says he has a different way of thinking this time. The warden points out that he would like to focus on the lack of transportation issue. He would like to have a plan worked out so this does not become an issue in the future. Inmate states that easier access to PO would have been helpful. Transportation is a major issue in southwest Virginia. Increases in technology have made the visits more accessible than in the past. There are some MCO's that have services to those who receive Medicaid. They can transport to medical appointments, food banks and pharmacies.

Inmate number two is from the Roanoke Valley. He is a senior member of the re-entry program. Incarcerated 79-83. Again 89-96 and back again in 2005. Created the "Why

Me" program. Parents were married for 65 years. At age 7 he lost a brother. Turned to the streets. Being locked up didn't change him. His daughter got shot by her boyfriend. Turned back to the street. Sent back to prison again. Started to embrace the challenges. Didn't know how to deal with the issues he had. Most people like me turn to drugs and hang out with people that don't help. Looking back, there are ways he could have dealt with his losses. Learning who I was and how I could have made changes that could have led me down a different path. Members state that he has a wealth of experiences and many could learn from his experience. A goal is to use life experience to help others. He gets out in 4-months and wants to use his voice to help others. He understands that things have changed a lot in recent years but there is lots of youth that could benefit from hearing his story. Members thank him for telling his story. The impact of trauma in early years is something that society didn't understand how to help but we have come a long way. DARS is a resource that could be valuable to the inmate.

Inmate three was placed on probation in 1983 and a youth. There was alcohol use and family abuse. Left home at 14. Alcohol was an escape. Every issue was due to drinking. It was a way of checking out. Was placed on Antabuse and received some help. He was violated repeatedly to keep him off the street. There needs to be changes in the PO system to make it more difficult to violate a client. He has received two doctorate degrees while incarcerated. His recent success is due to advances in treatment of mental health issues due to trauma. In the 1990's there was widespread movement to lock people with mental health and trauma issues. Hopefully recent developments will lead to the necessary changes. Members state that assessments are now commonplace and go a long way to ensure that the needed services are provided. Members state that PO's in the past were feared and parolees did not want to meet with their PO because they thought one wrong visit could lead to lengthy prison sentences. He is encouraged to work closely with his PO and come clean with any issues that may be barriers to success. He is encouraged to seek help from the re-entry council upon release. The warden states that the purpose of this meeting is to identify any issues that lead to recidivism. There are virtual programming for PO and mental health to assist with receiving services. A member points out that a past trauma can lead to additional trauma. He is encouraged to continue speaking about the trauma to deal with the root cause of the issues. He states that the CSB at the county jail was beneficial in helping him identify his issues early on. They are the ones who were able to simply the problem. Inmates are encouraged to reach out to CSB upon release to get case management and the treatment that will get to the root cause of addiction. Medicaid expansion now covers more services than in the past. It can also include dental. They have a reduced rate for those with substance issues. They are encouraged to apply for Medicaid prior to release. There is a pre COG program at Bland that is a valuable resource.

Inmate number four is a mentor in pre COG. Had work release and instead of coming back to Roanoke, he stayed over in Georgia and worked in a chicken plant. He started hanging out with guys from work and getting high. PO put him on house arrest. After 6-months they shut down the program. Family from Roanoke helped him out. Couldn't get a job. Ran back to Roanoke. Lied to family and told them his PO released him. Worked at a couple of jobs until they learned he had a felony. Developed a drug problem. In and out

of jail in Roanoke. Has a 20-year sentence for robbery. Due to not asking for help when he needed it. Scheduled to be released in 9-years. Encouraged to continue to use his skills and talents within the facility. Members asked what society can do to prevent people from coming back. He says he had a problem and denied it. Reminded that the culture now is a little different. Back in the day felons were not offered many opportunities upon release. There are numerous resources available today to help those who seek it. There is a book titled “What Happened to You” that questions trauma and can help people understand how things that happened early in their lives and how that can impact their lives today. Linda offers to send a copy of the book to the inmates in the meeting this morning. PTSD was once thought to only be those who have been to war but today we realize there are many sources of trauma that can lead to PTSD.

Stan thanked the inmates for taking the time to get in front of a camera and admit their faults to a group of strangers.

New Business

- Refer to committee members: None.

January 10, 2022 Council Presentations:

Jason Pritchard and Candace Miller with the Peer Help program through Ballad Health will present at the January meeting.

Sub-Committee Reports

Housing Committee/ Service Integration Committee/ Grants/Finance Committee
(Matt, Emma, Andy, Felisha, and Linda)

Employment Committee: (Jimmy with DARS, Mike with VEC)
None

Mentoring Committee/ Substance Abuse Committee: (Ruth, Teresa, Chris, Chuck)
None

Public Relations Committee: (Manuel)
None

Executive Committee: (Chris, Richard, Felisha and Chris).
None

Re-entry Updates

None

Local Coalition Updates

Questions/Concerns/Comments/Announcements:

Please see email regarding resource fair.

Felisha with OEI mentioned a Cars program. They are seeking donations of cars. They have a non-profit dealer's license. They have programs available for those who have no or bad credit.

Ballad Health has new employers who will hire those who are justice involved or in recovery. Have 6-clients scheduled for intake who are needing a job.

Matt is needing to hire several people for his pallet shop.

Matt says the Facebook page needs to be updated. There are some members (Matt and Linda) who are willing to submit material for inclusion on the page. A social media work group could be formed and share relevant information. It is a great way to connect with the community. An option would be to have several administrators that can share information.

Next meeting –*January 10, 2022: second Monday*

We meet the second Monday of each month.

<http://www.highlandscoc.org>

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The meeting adjourned at 11:55am.

If there is someone you would like for us to invite to a future meeting as either a guest or member, please let one of us know.

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Respectfully submitted,

Chris Austin
Secretary