Dynamics of Mentoring Ex-Offenders

for the Re-Entry Study Commission

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Introduction to Trusted Mentors

Mission Statement: Trusted Mentors uses the power of mentoring to help adults establish stable lives by reducing the chaos brought about by poverty, homelessness, under-employment and the effects of incarceration. The mentoring relationships improve lives by developing skills and positive social networks that empower people to:

- remain housed
- make a positive contribution to the community
- advance their education
- successfully exit the criminal justice system
- or improve parenting skills.

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Trusted Mentors History

- Initiated in 2003 as a response to Indianapolis Blueprint to End Homelessness.
- Executive Director, Jeri Warner, contracted with CHIP to start it.
- Incubated as a church program at Immanuel UCC
- Became an independent agency in 2008
- In 2010, expanded to 2 Tracks to Success: Mentoring for Long Term Homelessness Prevention and Mentoring for Successful Re-Entry
- Currently provide mentors to clients of 17 agencies
- Received Community Crime Prevention Grants since 2009

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History of Success

Since 2003, over 80% of our mentees have remained housed while in contact with their mentors.

In 2011, Trusted Mentors supported 84 mentoring relationships, **44 in homeless prevention:**

- *90% remained housed while in the program*
- *69% decreased their social alienation and/or strengthened current family relationships*

40 in the area of re-entry

- *70% successfully completed, or are completing, the requirements of the criminal justice system. Of those that took root, 86% successfully completed, or are completing, the criminal justice requirements.*

- *100% of the mentors attend training*
- *100% of the mentors received ongoing coaching*

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Mentoring Ex-offenders

- A relatively new approach based on the success of well run youth mentoring programs to positively affect behavior.
- A study by Public/Private Ventures of Ready4Work programs in 2003 showed that with mentors ex-offenders were more likely to:
  - Find a job
  - Retain the job longer
  - Less likely to recidivate

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Definition of a Mentor

- "Mentoring is defined as a relationship over a prolonged period of time between two or more people where caring volunteer mentors assist ex-prisoners in successfully and permanently reentering their communities by providing consistent support as needed, guidance, and encouragement that impacts ex-offenders in developing positive social relationships and achieving program outcomes such as job retention, family reunification, reduced recidivism, etc."
  - Dept of Labor (DOL) Grant Program Definition

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Why Mentoring Works?

The mentoring relationship helps develop the social and emotional skills that can help a person move forward.

The relationship:

- *builds confidence*
- *provides a resource for concrete ideas*
- *provides a neutral, safe place to vent & explore new options*
- *provides a role model for different ways of success*
- *develops new skills that need to be acquired or relearned*

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Best Practices for Mentoring Organizations

(Center for Effective Public Policy)

- Maintain mentor/mentee relationships for a minimum of 6 months (the longer the relationship the better chance of success).
- Matches meet a minimum of once every two weeks.
- Volunteer mentors rather than paid staff
- Training and monitoring for mentors, with on-going support to build relationships
- Opportunities for Recognition
- Closure at the end of the relationship.

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Challenges for a Mentoring Program

- Recruitment of mentors
  - Challenging and time consuming
  - More volunteer management than case management
- Recruitment of mentees
  - "one more thing to do"
  - View that mentoring is for children, not adults
  - Lack of trust
- Successful match
  - Age, gender, needs and interest
  - Must like each other

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Resources

- http://www.cepp.com/documents/Building%20Offenders%27%20Community%20Assets%20Through%20Mentoring.pdf
- http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/announcements/the-critical-components-of-mentor-program-development
- http://www.issuelab.org/resource/mentoring_former_prisoners_a_guide_for_reentry_programs
- http://www.issuelab.org/resource/mentoring_formerly_incarcerated_adults_insights_from_the_ready4work_reentry_initiative

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