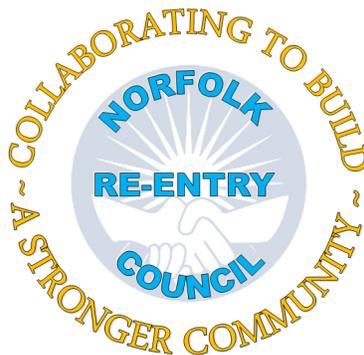


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## Norfolk Re-Entry Council Meeting Minutes May 21, 2021

**Platform:** Zoom

- I. **Introductions:** Co-convener Kathryn Hall (VADOC) and Madonna Flores (DHS) introduced themselves and thanked those in attendance. A reminder was given to place computers and devices on mute unless speaking and to use the Chat feature to request opportunity to speak. Attendees were asked to enter their names and agencies in the Chat for attendance tracking.
- II. **Presentation:**  
*Lashawnda Singleton, VADOC Community Outreach Coordinator*
  - Peer Recovery Specialist (PRS) requirements include criminal justice involvement, completion of all supervision, GED or HS diploma, and completion of PRS training.
  - All districts are being reviewed to determine PRS needs.
  - PRS's serve as "boots on the ground" and identify agencies, non-profits, and community partners and provide resource information to re-entry councils.
- III. **Program Updates:**
  - **Norfolk Department of Human Services:** (*Melissa Ross*) introduced herself as the CARES/Re-Entry TEAM's Family Services Specialist III and shared an overview of her responsibilities in addressing client barriers to employment, particularly regarding mental health, substance abuse, etc. She identified employment as the primary TEAM focus and discussed services provided, including case management, workshops (internal and through community partners), and the Gateway Academy. SNAP benefits through Norfolk are required. She shared a recent client success story with a positive employment outcome despite multiple barriers. Madonna Flores shared that employers reach out to the TEAM in pursuit of potential candidates and employment referrals are available periodically.
  - **Department of Child Support Enforcement – Eastern District:** No update provided.
  - **Institutions:**

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- ❖ Community Involvement Committee
  - ❖ Hampton Roads Reentry Employment Committee
    - ❖ Juvenile Reentry Committee
    - ❖ Planning Committee

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- *Indian Creek Correctional Center* shared successes with COVID incentives, “word of the day,” reentry packages, bonding informational videos, academic videos, Narcan to take home upon release, obtaining Social Security cards and DMV ID’s, and the January fatherhood program that allowed dads to record messages for their children. A question was asked regarding plans for providers to return to the institutions and there are not at this time but hopefully in the near future.
- *Norfolk City Jail (Michael O’Toole)* shared about successes with COVID vaccinations and potential for opening the facility up a little more. There is need for 16 female referrals for a vocational program that provides training, \$30,000 in pay for three years, two years of benefits from Tidewater Community College. They are on pace for over 200 participants in the reentry program and have seen successes in the drug program, father’s program, men’s prayer, TCC shipyard trade-focused vocational programs (educational focus).
- **Probation & Parole:**
  - *Norfolk P&P (Kathy Hall)* is operating at half-staff with a rotation of employees in the office and will increase to  $\frac{3}{4}$  staff in the near future. There is a limit of six people are allowed in the lobby, screening questions for COVID are asked, and temperatures are checked.
  - *Norfolk Court Services Unit/Juvenile Probation (Theresa McBride)* reports that staff continues to telework and is shifting to return to the office. Juvenile probationers continue to report, and PPE and safety standards are in place.
- **Veterans:**
  - *VEC (Diane Murray)* reports continued following of CDC guidance and a date is not available for full reopening. There is a statewide hiring event on June 8 from 1:00 to 5:00 in partnership with Virginia Career Works. The HRVEC opens June 1 and walk-ins can see a representative. Workshops continue virtually.
- **Others:**
  - *DARS (Yohance Goodrich)* reported that DARS offices are open and following CDC guidelines. Most staff teleworks and rotate shifts in the office. Virtual platforms are also being used for client meetings.

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- *CSB (Brandi Whitman)* shared that she has been open and receiving referrals from the Norfolk City Jail and holding appointments in the Public Safety Building. COVID screenings and masks are required. Zoom appointments and phone calls are used to keep people well so they do not return to the jail. CSB has 55 tents for the homeless at the former Greyhound station with 24-hour security and a focus on privacy. The homeless population doubled during the pandemic. Churches and community partners provide meals. Individuals can just show up for services, preferably during business hours. She is not sure if help is needed.
- *CSB (Rachel Greenberg)* reported that juvenile services continue to be provided but not every day at detention and the court. Services are combined in person and virtual. CSB is no longer at the Olney site. Juvenile services are provided at Robin Hood Road and adult services at the Central Business Park.
- *Virginia Beach Justice Initiative (Kathy Confer)* reported that services continue, and virtual trainings are held at Norfolk City Jail via Zoom. They are available for referrals, training, and outreach in person or by Zoom.
- *Food Bank (Heidi Grass)* reports that she is the new SNAP Community Outreach Coordinator and that effective July 1, new income eligibility requirements will help more people receive SNAP assistance. She will be reaching out to the institutions to offer services.
- *Unite Us (Taylor Miller)* shared that Unite Us began working with United Way of Hampton Roads through Mission United to serve veterans and service members but has grown in scope statewide working with health departments, human services agencies, NPO's to provide a referral network for clients. Joining is free for community-based organizations, local and state agencies, schools – safety net service providers. The network verifies client connection to services. She is available to provide one-on-one software demos.
- *SSA (Lizna Odhwani)* shared that she is available to assist with SSI, serve as a speaker, provide publications and trainings, and help obtain SS cards. She can offer webinars and updates on changes. She has an email mailing list. SS offices are open to appointments only Monday-

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Friday, 9-4. SSA.gov/locator can help find a local office. They are taking disability, SSI claims.

#### IV. Committee Updates:

- Employment (*Jason Ewers*) reported that the Committee has met twice (3/23 and 5/18) since the last NRC meeting. The meetings provided networking opportunities and concentrated on the digital divide, especially areas of limited access to technology and digital literacy faced by clients. Barriers to employment are created by these new challenges in an increasingly virtual employment landscape. The Committee is working to identify resource information to address those two areas of need. Future attention will be focused on informational sessions related to employment for clients and employers. The next meeting is June 15.
- Planning (*Madonna Flores*) shared that the Committee is planning a series of video recordings to present information to those incarcerated at local and state facilities. Surveys showed an interest in information on VDSS benefits and other topics such as SSI, child support enforcement, DMV, rights restoration, and selective service. Two have been recorded – TANF and DOC? Videos will be edited, and closed captioning added. There are plans to create myth buster resource videos. The Committee meets next in June. The Summit event is tentatively scheduled for September 9 and the format is TBD.

Madonna Flores shared that the NRC will be using Zoom and moving away from Google Meets as some agencies are unable to use Google.

**Next Meeting:** July 16, 2021 at 9:00am – Platform to be announced

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