

# MENTORING SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following report is submitted to the CAB as a summary explanation of the recommendations of the Mentoring Services Review Committee. IF approved this report will, with any recommended/necessary amendments be submitted to the CCP.

At the March CAB meeting Chair, Harlan Grossman, notified the board that the CCP requested a review of the mentoring services being funded by the county.

The committee met twice: **March 19, 2015** (*Present: Michele Wells, Angelene Musawwir, Paul Taylor, Frank Hancock, Harlan Grossman, Stephanie Medley, Charles Brown III, Lara Delaney, Donte Blue*) and **March 27, 2015** (*Present: Michele Wells, Vernon Williams, Paul Taylor (CHD) Roosevelt Terry, Mace Thompson, Harlan Grossman, Frank Hancock (MWP), Stephanie Medley and Charles Brown*). The purpose of these two meetings was to evaluate the mentoring services being provided AND to evaluate the administrative role of Brighter Beginnings and determine the value of this role.

The following report consists of three (3) sections: 1) CAB Procedural Recommendations 2) Administrative Recommendations and 3) Mentoring Services Recommendations.

## Methods of Review

The committee agreed to pursue a **balanced review** of the initial RFP weighted against the testimonial and experience of the three organizations in light of the administrative changes. Thus using the following as the basis for the review:

1. The committee will evaluate the mentoring services under consideration in keeping with the “Purpose, Services, and Outcomes” section of the original RFP. We have chosen this approach to support the goals of the CCP established by the *Contra Costa County Reentry Strategic Plan* for Public Safety Realignment. In particular, we aim to present recommendations that, “Provide for independent evaluations of reentry programs using, when feasible, random assignment and controlled studies to determine effectiveness of programs and services provided.” (“REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) #1302-005 Peer and Mentoring Services for AB 109 Program”)
2. Additionally, the committee will also consider how the original intention of the guidelines interact with the actual implementation of the mentoring programs and services under review in an effort to make recommendations based upon a balanced evaluation of the quantitative and qualitative data. To that end, our first meeting allowed for the testimonial and an intensive Q&A session with two representatives from two of the organizations that provide mentoring services:

Frank Hancock (Men & Women of Purpose) and Paul Taylor (Center for Human Development). Hearing first-hand accounts from the service providers supports the CCP's goal to "Use a holistic, systemic, and inclusive approach that involves federal, state and local government stakeholders, community organizations, advocates, the formerly incarcerated, and family and community members." By engaging with the service providers and considering their testimonial, the committee acknowledges that 1) Quantitative data do not capture a holistic perspective alone, 2) The short timeline of program implementation plays a role in the strength of the evaluation method 3) the changes in program administration structure have a direct impact on the organizations' respective ability to implement data and evaluation systems that communicate without explanation or engagement with those capturing the data.

# CAB PROCEDURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations begin by stating what CAB needs to do in order to ensure the orderly and effective review of the mentoring services being provided in the county.

## **1. Testimonial at CAB Meetings & Quarterly Review of the Quarterly Reports**

The committee believes that it would benefit the CAB to review the reports from the three (3) organizations (or the relevant set of organizations being funded to conduct services) on a regular basis. The review process was lengthy and cumbersome due to the overwhelming task of attempting to understand what has happened since the awards were made in 2013 while analyzing all of the changes that have taken place until now.

It is strongly recommended that CAB review mentoring services contracts quarterly and have the services providers attend the CAB meeting to provide a quarterly report to the administrator where they may provide a SWOT (analysis (15 minutes on the agenda) of their current operating status provided by the administrator of the services as representative for all three organizations.

If the CAB determines it necessary due to concerns that cannot be addressed in the meeting, the report/issue at hand should then be sent to the Quality Assurance Committee, Programs & Services Committee or a special ad-hoc committee (as determined by the CAB Chair) to review the concern of the quarter or if there are no issues with the quarterly report then we can move forward rather than allowing issues to accumulate each quarter.

At the CAB meeting following the resolution of the issue, the committee should then present as to how the issue was resolved. This allows CAB to be aware of the issues and provide assistance on a consistent basis.

In pursuing this CAB can provide ongoing assistance and recommendations such that there is a history and established relationship with the service providers that will enhance the legitimacy and efficiency of a review of the current nature.

In our review, we were not able to spend sufficient time giving a thoroughly independent review of the quarterly reports because much of our time was spent engaging with the service providers. It is challenging to provide for an independent review when the organizations have a desire to give testimony as to why and how they have come to the place that they have in their operating status. Nonetheless, in order for the review process to work, providers may be present but should be provided a forum to provide testimonial style input in the actual CAB meeting setting.

In keeping with the spirit of having organizations provide testimony at the CAB meetings, it is recommended that the annual review process be focused on reviewing the initial RFP to look for what transpired in each organization and what the cumulative needs, successes and challenges were throughout the year. This would then allow those present to, without having to make such recommendations to the organizations representatives directly, provide an honest recommendation as to whether or not the organizations being funded to provide said services should in fact continue doing so under AB109 funding.

All in all, for the nature of the process we undertook this time, having the organizations present was a great benefit as will be shown later on when the mentoring services are discussed, because the organizations testimonial allowed the committee to dig deeper into what is really happening through our own critical analysis and questioning of the representatives. We received insight that we would not have otherwise gleaned. However in the future we would like the written data and evaluation to convey the things that we gleaned verbally through intense discussion.

This review can also be a session where CAB can look at research and findings from other AB109 programs and services or similar programs across the nation to look for new and innovative ways of approaching mentoring but this can only be done if the work of reviewing the reports has been done in an orderly and timely basis up front. This would be a reflective and thoughtful review process.

## **2. Data & Evaluation Method**

In general, information on the actual nature of the services was inconsistent and did not provide for the analysis of data that would enable us to truly determine whether or not the mentoring services had been implemented effectively. In particular, the front end data collection and presentation of methods pertaining to the screening, matching and post-match monitoring processes was unavailable. Data on the referral process was inconsistent across organizations as discussed further, and surveys or methods of determining what the community members impacted by the services provided were not available to determine what the actual need of those most impacted has been. We also could not determine, from the data alone, whether or not the referral process was more effective through community engagement or through the original process. The process for designing the volunteer program was not available.

**It is recommended that the CAB move to develop a data collection spreadsheet or other relevant tool to track the data it will need to obtain to review the organizations' progress respectively against the original RFP. This can either be the work of the QAC or a return to the Mentoring Services Review Committee.** This recommendation supports the first in that it would further streamline the CAB's efforts to have a tool designed internally for our quarterly and annual review process.

# ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

The MSRC was attended by two of the three organizations provided funding under the contract under review. The organization not in attendance at either meeting, Brighter Beginnings, was contacted to provide testimony with respect to the committees' questions regarding the administrative role of Brighter Beginnings. In particular the committee asked: for 1) clarification on the referral process 2) what does the administrator actually do? 3) and what are the number of people served?

In response to the committee's questions, on April 1, 2015, Michele Wells, Vernon Williams III, Ignacio Ferrey, and Barbara McCullough met to discuss the administration role of mentoring services under review.

The information from this meeting and the information provided from the testimonial of the other organizations in addition to the quarterly reports, are working together to inform the committee's knowledge of how mentoring services are implemented. The recommendations here address concerns related 1) the referral process for identifying those designated as AB109, 2) the administrator role; and 3) data and evaluation.

The recommendations reflect the categories of the various **roles of the mentoring services administrator** relevant to this review.

## I. **Oversee Incoming Referrals**

Brighter Beginnings (BB) provided clarity on the referral process which has actually evolved into two separate processes: one in which the providers receive referrals and the other involves presentations to individuals who may potentially be designated as AB109 inside facilities. BB explained the challenges that they have faced as a result of pursuing these two separate processes at once while not having clarity or access to data that would direct them to those individuals who are in fact designated as AB109.

### **Recommendation: Collaboration to Access Data on AB 109 Population**

The service providers have relied upon a community engagement model that sees them actually speaking to potential mentees inside facilities yet according to Brighter Beginnings many of these individuals do not actually turn out to hold the proper designation. As it stands, they speak to individuals in these sessions in the hopes that they will be designated as AB 109.

### **Waiver/Consent Form**

One of the CCP's goal in the implementation of realignment in Contra Costa County has been to "Use a holistic, systemic, and inclusive approach that involves federal, state and local government stakeholders, community organizations, advocates, the formerly incarcerated, and family and community members." In an attempt to enhance the administrative role, while keeping the stated goals of CCP in sight, one recommendation that emerged from this meeting

was to seek ways of enhancing the collaboration between BB and law enforcement facilities, in particular, their data keepers.

BB noted that prohibit the sharing of data on a currently incarcerated individuals likely and understandably to ensure that the legal protections afforded that individual are maintained. Through our discussion it was suggested that the individual inputting data on an individual's designation with respect to AB109 might be asked to provide that individual with a waiver or information consent form that would waive their right to maintain the privacy of this designation in order that their information might be shared with service providers who have been designated by the county to provide them with services, mentoring and otherwise. The data keeper in the law enforcement agency would then provide the information of those who have given their consent to be contacted to the administrator who would then contact the AB 109 designee.

Such a process would support the CCP's goals, streamline the referral process, and, most importantly, directly identify and impact the population in need of the services provided.

### **Streamlined Data Collection & Reporting**

In its quarterly report (January – March 2014), the former administrator, Office of Education (CCCOE), reported that “hiring an assistant helped principal maintain database and communication with probation.” CCCOE also reported that “the AB 109 Peer and Mentoring Services database was created so that individual agencies could maintain their own data. During the Quarter 2 data and report submission, it was discovered that agencies were not consistent in how data was input and maintained.” This finding of CCCOE's remained a central challenge through the end of 2014 and is yet still a challenge in 2015. Identifying and understanding the actions and progress of the three service providers in a central data system is a primary concern of the committee.

#### **1. Administrator Must Keep A Record of All Referrals**

The administrator does not currently have accurate data or data collection methods that would enable CAB to accurately determine how the referral process is moving.

The administrator cited changes in the communication between himself and the relevant departments in being copied (electronically) on all communication being sent to the service providers. Regrettably, the administrator was not proactive in ensuring being copied on all such referrals and has only recently made efforts to collect the information. Thus the records of the administrator are not in keeping with that of the two providers.

It seems fitting to the committee that the administrator, as given the title, should at all times have an accurate record of what is happening with the programs being administered. Mentoring is a people based service, based upon the mentors, mentees and, with three organizations functioning in three separate ways, the administrator must be the bridge between CAB and the on-the-ground operations. At the moment, this has not been achieved.

## **II. Track Data on Referrals**

When CCCOE stepped down as administrator, BB made the transition from a Microsoft Access based database to an Excel Spreadsheet styled database. BB cited the time and effort required to manage Access as the reason for the shift. This shift in methods, coupled with the shift in the manner of the receipt of referrals underscored by the administrators not being proactive in ensuring proper documentation on referrals has resulted in improper data management resulted.

The committee recommends an evaluation of the administrator's data management capacity (including time and people available to conduct such duties).

## **III. Organize Mentor/Mentee Social Outings**

As of March 2015, 1 social outing was organized and hosted for the fiscal year 2014-15. If the goal of the mentoring services administrator is to provide for consistent meetings between the mentor and mentees it would seem reasonable to expect the administrator to host meetings on a monthly basis. Noting that the first meeting between mentors and mentees was scheduled for February, as the committee understands that the grant period is July – June, we are concerned that it was six (6) months after the grant period began that the first event was organized by Brighter Beginnings for the fiscal year.

We recommend that the administrator be required to host monthly meetings and ensure the consistent contact between mentors and mentees to bolster the formation of long lasting bonds.

## **IV. Potential Conflict of Interest**

It seems reasonable to note that there may exist a potential conflict of interest. This remains to be discussed by the committee. However it should be noted in the interest of the communities receiving services that the administrator, while performing administrative duties in organizing recruitment efforts inside facilities, at the same time engages in recruitment of a separate program not considered part of the mentoring services collection of services.

It would seem reasonable that the administrator, in its execution of administrative duties, would at all times, while performing those function be supporting the recruitment and overall success of the programs and services it administers.

From the community's perspective, this would tend to give the appearance of a conflict of interest because the services provided under a separate program by the administrator could service to compete with the mentoring service providers potential mentees/mentors thus the administrator could concomitantly be perceived as also a service provider in the midst of supporting the work of the other organizations.

The CAB is asked to consider and further review what its policy is regarding such potential conflicts.

# MENTORING SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. Adopt a Clear Definition of Mentoring Services

The committee accepts the following definition as presented in the original RFP:

“Mentoring” refers to a developmental relationship in which a more experienced person helps a less experienced person develop an enhanced sense of self-worth and specific knowledge and skills to increase their chance of successful reentry. Mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional and personal development with the primary goal of preparing an individual (pre-release) for reentry and supporting him/her during the reentry process to enhance success. **Most importantly, mentoring facilitates connections to prosocial networks and role models within the community that can facilitate new ways of thinking.**

Mentoring involves communication, is relationship-based, and can take many forms. It may consist of a one-to-one relationship or it can also occur in a small group setting. **Mentoring also includes support with family reunification including fostering family readiness, health, safety, and receptivity during reentry and reintegration.**

## 2. Support an Integrative Service Model

In their respective implementation of mentoring services, Men & Women of Purpose and Center for Human Development have observed that **mentoring services are most effective when coupled when supportive services**. A recommendation from the committee that would support an integrated model of services would enhance the existing collaborative work already present among these two organizations. This would also support the goals of the CCP. This would also be supported by research specific to the implementation of mentoring programs geared towards reentry populations:

“Mentoring alone is not enough. People newly released from prison have many needs—including housing, health care and employment—that must be addressed very quickly so that they do not develop into insurmountable barriers to successful reentry. Virtually all of the participants in Ready4Work received case management and employment services, including soft-skills training and job placement assistance. In addition, some participants took advantage of other wraparound services, such as GED classes or alcohol and drug counseling. The importance of such services is well known. While dependable and supportive mentoring relationships can be a crucial component of a reentry initiative, those relationships are a complement to—not a substitute for—these necessary reentry services.” (“[Mentoring Former Prisoners A Guide for Reentry Programs](#)”, Public/Private Ventures, 2009).



### **3. Assist Organizations with Program Implementation & Data Collection**

Frank Hancock (MWP) provided insight on his experiences providing mentoring services to the committee. He discussed strong and high numbers of referrals under the Office of Education's administration that had since dropped. He requested assistance with respect to data and evaluation capacity

- a. The committee noted positive outcomes on the training and curriculum provided by MWP. The committee was however concerned about missing data with respect to **Screening Potential Mentors & Matching Mentors to Mentees**. The committee evaluated the reports to determine whether or not the organizations "Conducted reasonably intensive screening of potential mentors" and found that too little review, data or information is provided with respect to the 1) Screening Process and 2) Match Process had been included. This will be discussed in detail in relationship to the quarterly reports in the next meeting.
- b. The committee also inquired about specific data pertaining to the mentor/mentee relationships: how many mentors currently on staff/volunteering? What is the mentor/mentee ratio? Who is paired with whom? Where is the documentation of a proven ongoing relationship? What is the process for goal setting/attaining? Is there a limit to the number of mentees? What is working? What has been the outcome overall?

These questions were not answered at the time of inquiry but were noted by Mr. Hancock who was eager to provide responses in subsequent meetings which the committee will follow up on before giving a final report.

- c. The committee was also concerned that the data did not demonstrate that potential mentees were asked for regular input/feedback. Questions were: What do potential mentees need in a mentor?

**The committee recommends that the organizations be provided with assistance in data collection, tracking and data keeping methods that are most suitable to the nature of the work that they do and would be best implemented with ease.**

### **4. Assist Organizations with Developing Volunteer Selection & Training**

Paul Taylor, CHD, provided insight into the challenges of implementing a strict one-on-one mentoring program. He noted 1) an initial difficulty with obtaining and retaining volunteers which has since been addressed; 2) challenges with staff/organization; and, 3) a strong desire to collaborate with MWP to provide family reunification services to bolster the one-on-one support.

The committee understands that Mr. Taylor views the current services provided as having departed from the strict/traditional societal view of one on one mentoring but accepts that

they serve the needs of the community and the CCP's goals and values in a more expanded view of what mentoring is and should be in the county.

We believe the CAB can assist by providing organizations with information and proper support in their development of volunteers in order to ensure the efficiency of the programs being funded. This could be accomplished in many ways perhaps by engaging Americorps VISTA, Volunteers of America, or local agencies and bodies that have successfully implemented mentor training programs with the reentry population.

## CONCLUSION

There is still more work to be done. More analysis is needed to understand what the population targeted actually needs in order to be successfully and consistently mentored. Not to mention that mentoring is one facet of a much larger web of challenges: housing, employment, mental health etc. We hope this report is understood with a spirit of collaboration and a strong desire to improve ourselves even as we work to understand and try to assist others with improving their organizational processes.

It goes without saying but deserves to be said that the organizations are all working hard to serve this population to the best of their ability. From the conversation and testimonials we saw organizations that cared deeply and wanted to partner with the CAB to make the county services better. We share the same goals and together we can achieve them.

These are the recommendations of the Mentoring Services Review Committee as submitted to CAB on April 9, 2015.

Michele Wells  
MSRC Chair