

BJay Pak

U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia



BJay Pak is the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia. He was nominated by President Trump on July 21, 2017 and was confirmed by the Senate on September 28, 2017. From 2002 to 2008, he was an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Criminal Division of the office that he now leads. Previously, he was in private practice representing clients in high stakes civil litigation and in criminal investigations. BJay also served as a State Representative in the Georgia General Assembly from January 2011 to January 2017, where he was a Deputy Majority Whip, and Vice Chairman of the House Judiciary Non-civil committee. He graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Illinois College of Law, and is also a CPA. He and his wife, Sandra, have 3 beautiful daughters and live in Lilburn.



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U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Georgia (USAO-NDGA)
Testimony on Reentry and Prevention
Before the Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement
and the Administration of Justice

Background

As part of the reinvigorated PSN focus on reentry and crime prevention, I directed U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) staff to research evidence-based practices in that arena. Starting in 2014, our Office had engaged former offenders in prevention efforts with at-risk students because our message (as law enforcement and prosecutors) was even more impactful when delivered alongside a person who had actually experienced the consequences of poor decisions that led to the criminal justice system. Through PSN, we considered whether to engage former offenders to intervene successfully in reentry efforts with incarcerated juveniles and young adults who were facing release back into the community.

Our research showed that this model is not new. Dating back to 1992, the Credible Messenger (CM) Model matches justice-involved (or otherwise at-risk) young people who have a high risk of criminal offending, with “credible messengers”: that is, specially trained adults with relevant life experiences who act as mentors. The idea of a credible messenger is a public health approach to reducing violence. CMs are peer mentors who have experienced what a returning citizen feels and who know the challenges they face. Indeed, CMs are typically people who previously served substantial sentences in state or federal prison and have dedicated themselves to anti-recidivism efforts. Unlike with other mentoring initiatives, CMs are “wounded healers” so they are uniquely qualified to connect with individuals of similar backgrounds and usher them into a new stage of life.

According to the Credible Messenger Justice Center (CMJC), numerous communities and jurisdictions have implemented this model over the past few decades in hospitals, communities, and youth detention centers. Although there is limited research to date, a number of impact studies show promising outcomes. For example, the Arches Transformative Mentoring program in New York City has shown a 69% lower felony arrest rate after 12 months of participation, and a 57% lower felony arrest rate after 24 months of participation in the program. In Boston, Chicago, and Baltimore, programs have mobilized formerly incarcerated individuals to reach the most “hard-to-reach” drivers of violence and rendered significant reductions in shootings and killings (41-73%), re-arrests (33%), and attitudes supporting violence (14%). Overall, CM models have not only deterred crime, but have also reinforced pro-social behaviors, community accountability, and living examples of hope and transformation. Additionally, a 2017 study by the Urban Institute found that the CM approach yields increased engagement with programs and services; increased compliance with court mandates; improved relationships between stakeholders and community members; and a reduction in re-arrests, violations, gun violence, and anti-social behavior. Although CM programs exist across the country, and now are considered a promising evidence-based practice, rarely has the approach been applied to help adults in prison prepare for release.

Considering this information, I authorized the USAO to pay for one NDGA representative (the Community Outreach Specialist) and two local CMs to travel to New York City for the 3-day Credible Messenger Immersion Program in June 2018. I also authorized USAO funds to hire an independent research partner, Applied Research Services (ARS), to help structure our own CM program and contribute to the growing body of research around this promising reentry practice.

Structure and Implementation

Reentry programs that focus on those most at-risk of recidivism can have the biggest impact on violence rates. The “2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism” by the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that 68% of prisoners nationally are re-arrested within three years. Characteristics related to recidivism that varied across time were sex, race, age, and crime type. ARS computed comparable statistics for Georgia and found the same proportion of re-arrests in 2016 among state releases. Along with multiple arrests before incarceration, 73% of those who were re-arrested in Georgia were arrested more than once after their release (see Table 1 in Supplement). The data show that males, younger individuals, people of color, and those who are undereducated, have a harder time reintegrating (i.e., higher recidivism rates) compared to others who were similarly situated. Additional analyses show that individuals previously charged with a gun crime, and who are known gang members, are most likely to re-offend in Georgia (see Table 1).

In addition to data about those most at risk of recidivism, we learned that CMs who successfully connect with at-risk young people have a common profile:

- Have come from similar communities;
- Were formerly incarcerated or connected to the justice system through other lived experiences;
- Have turned their lives around through similar methods in which support is offered;
- Have demonstrated integrity and transformation;
- Are skilled and trained in mentoring high-risk, high-need younger people.

For this reason, the NDGA PSN program deploys CMs to engage with incarcerated juvenile and young adult males with significant criminal histories and aims to reduce barriers to their reentry (e.g., criminal thinking, the lack of employment, substance abuse/mental health treatment, housing, and other services) (see PSN Prevention/Reentry Logic Model). We recruited CMs who met the aforementioned profile and developed intervention/reentry strategies for youth and adults with direct input from trusted CMs and data from ARS.

The youth program CM lead, Omar Howard, is the founder of Freedom is a Choice, Inc., and the adult program CM lead, Arthur Powell, is the founder of EGRESS Consultants and Services, LLC. Both Howard and Powell began volunteering with NDGA prevention programs in 2014, and later became contractors to continue that work. Howard and Powell served a combined 26 years in the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) and have led anti-recidivism efforts in the decade since their release. Our adult program also incorporates 21 trained CM mentors who are part of the Offender Alumni Association (OAA), a non-profit, grassroots organization that provides support forums that encourage former offenders to establish healthy relationships in their communities and with their families after their release. Vetting for all NDGA CMs included reference checks with other county and state agencies with whom they were already contracting; criminal background checks to ensure individuals have represented themselves accurately; and consistent observation of authentic and appropriate messaging to a variety of audiences as well as commitment to the accountability required for the program. Ongoing vetting includes the CM’s ability to accept

constructive feedback, willingness to grow personally and professionally, observed responses to their own life challenges as they arise, and ongoing compliance with management and reporting requirements.

Of vital importance is our designated point person within the USAO, namely, our Community Outreach Specialist. That person serves as a Project Manager who oversees the administration of the program; acts as a liaison to address program planning, concerns, milestone achievements, and opportunities for growth amongst coordinated partnerships; and engages the community for resource development, asset mapping, capacity building and service delivery. That point person ensures that the USAO is fulfilling our PSN leadership obligation and serves as the convener for other criminal justice agencies that would otherwise restrict or forbid access to facilities based on CM criminal backgrounds. For CMs, specifically, having one designated government liaison helps to mitigate potential issues before they arise. It also reminds CMs of the serious and national nature of the partnership and that the program is a cultivated relationship that they value deeply.

Implementation of the Adult CM Reentry Program

In July 2018, our adult reentry initiative began in the GDC Metro Reentry Facility with young men serving the last 12–18 months of incarceration for a gun-related and/or gang-affiliated criminal offense. For the first six months of the program, each adult reentry group met for two hours weekly, in sessions facilitated by a team of two CM Mentors from EGRESS Consultants and Services and OAA. To date, there have been three cohorts of program participants totaling 87 individuals – 54 men have completed the adult reentry group in two cohorts, with a third cohort of 14 currently enrolled (completion has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

The majority of participants are young, black males, who are at the greatest risk of recidivism. During enrollment, their average age was 30 years old. Twenty-one percent of their previous 669 combined arrests were for violence (65% for felonies). When incarcerated, only 6% were married, more than half (53%) had children, a quarter had graduated high school (only half could read at an 8th grade level), and 35% were employed. They were incarcerated for murder/manslaughter, aggravated assaults, aggravated stalking, armed robbery/robbery, home invasion, aggravated battery, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and/or during the commission of a crime, and many other serious crimes. Fifty-one percent were validated members of violent gangs, including the Crips, Bloods, Gangster Disciples, Ghostface, and GoodFellas.

Among the highest needs that program participants identified for themselves were employment (93%), dental or health care (83%), a support network (80%), transportation (70%), obtaining identification (70%), and housing (51%). A large majority (91%) recognized they need a mentor or life coach to help achieve their goals.

To date, 25 graduates have been released, 60% of whom are doing well and are in regular contact with their CM Mentors. While releases have staggered throughout 2019, most program participants have been out of prison for six months or longer. CMs have facilitated 80 OAA Support Forums with 449 in cumulative attendance (avg. 5-6 people per group). After release, nearly 70% found employment. Nine graduates have passed their first year since release. Four have reoffended but none for violent or gang charges. That is significantly lower than the national and state average.

Implementation of the Youth CM Reentry Program

In February 2019, our PSN youth reentry initiative, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, Atlanta Youth Development Campus, began with nine youths within the last two

months of detention who had been adjudicated for a variety of gun or gang-related criminal activity.¹ Cohort 1 met for 90 minutes weekly, for 10 weeks, in sessions facilitated by a team of two CM Mentors. Nine individuals between 17-20 years old attended between five and eight program sessions between February and April 2019.

All nine youths completed the reentry group, with four of the most defiant youths having perfect attendance. To date, all have been released back into their communities. While three of the youths have reoffended and two never contacted their mentors upon release, two engage with mentors sporadically and four maintain regular contact with CM Mentors. None were terminated or withdrew from the program. Nearly half requested additional support, 67% engaged in mentoring afterwards, and several were connected to housing services. Three have been rearrested for a 66% success rate, more than the national average.

As part of our juvenile intervention/reentry strategy, CMs have also facilitated Forward Thinking Youth Mentoring Groups at a local police department and juvenile court, with 107 participants (seven parents/guardian), and 75 participants (four parents/guardian), respectively.

Prior to release, participants complete classes within the facility in job training, soft skills, and financial literacy. Upon graduation, private sector partners provide each participant with a new business suit, shirt and tie. Once released, CM Mentors help with referring participants for interviews and transportation to local “second chance” employers like Chick-fil-A, CKS Packaging, and Diaz Foods. Additionally, CMs present information on hiring fairs and employment opportunities at the weekly OAA Support Forums.

More broadly, CMs have logged over 1,600 encounters with 104 individuals at risk of reoffending. While contacts lasted from less than a minute to seven hours, there have collectively been approximately 1,000 hours of mentoring. While the largest proportion of encounters involve periodically checking in with the returning citizen, about a third are for support and a quarter for service-linking, motivation, and other times mentors provide advice, counseling, and other aid.

Funding

Prior to the release of PSN funding from the DOJ, I authorized the funding of initial start-up operations through the USAO budget. As a result, the USAO contributed a total of \$107,901 to the Credible Messenger Initiative to cover CM contractors for youth/adult reentry programming, training, ARS, and other expenses.

PSN FY18 grant funds contributed an additional \$219,748 for CM contracts, OAA Support Forum facilitation, Forward Thinking youth mentoring, counseling services, transportation and emergency housing assistance, and supplies for a 2-year period.

The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation also provided OAA with a grant for \$58,100 to provide housing assistance to CM program participants. The NFL and Atlanta Falcons Social Justice Committee provided a reentry support grant of \$11,500 as well.

¹ An ARS study of more than eighty years of DJJ and Georgia criminal history records showed that among the 8% or less of juvenile offenders placed into a YDC, the majority reoffend. Indeed, 60% go on to be adult offenders.

Lessons Learned – Recommendations

- Recruiting and retaining CMs requires developing relationships with trustworthy and reliable CMs who will refer others.
- Establish a formal process with each CM (including an MOU or Partnership Agreement) that outlines potential conflicts of interest with the sponsoring agency, types of conduct that warrant relationship severance, expected behavior, social media expectations).
- CMs need to be paid for their time, commitment and expertise,² given the non-traditional hours and duties required and the enormous amount of contact required between a successful CM Mentor and Mentee.
- Ongoing professional development and training for CMs must include trauma-informed practices (i.e., keeping yourself and your team healthy).
- CMs need the support of their supervisors/program managers, as they also navigate obstacles that can randomly arise for a formerly incarcerated person.
- Opportunities should be available for CM Mentees to become Mentors themselves with appropriate vetting, screening and ongoing attention and support.
- Consider stipends for program participants and/or goal completions.
- Mentoring programs should include hot meals as often as possible, periodic recreational and educational activities and opportunities, and community improvement projects.
- Working with grassroots organizations with limited federal grant experience can be overwhelming and overly limiting (*i.e.*, restrictions on the purchase of food or paying participants stipends as incentives for goal achievement incentives).
- Fund a research partner to serve as an independent evaluator for programming impact and outcomes.
- Invest in systematic data tracking and reviews for continuous quality improvement.

² As an example, the average CM Mentoring program budget for Community Connections for Youth (CCFY) (one of the model CM programs in New York City), is approximately \$350,000 per year to employ one full-time CM as Project Coordinator and 3 to 4 full-time CM mentors. CCFY recommends a minimum starting salary of \$50,000, plus health benefits, for a full-time, seasoned CM. However, if full-time positions are unavailable, no less than \$20 per hour is suggested.

APPENDIX

Additional Resources

- 8-minute video about NDGA Credible Messengers:
<https://youtu.be/q2h4yqXv-fg>
- Website for the Credible Messenger Justice Center (CMJC):
<https://cmjcenter.org/>
- Website for the Offender Alumni Association (OAA):
<https://www.offenderalumniassociation.org/>
- Website for Freedom is a Choice, Inc.:
<http://www.freedomisachoice.net/>

Daniel F. Meyer

CEO, Nehemiah Manufacturing



Dan has nearly 40 years of consumer packaged goods experience. He has held senior management positions with large, multi-national companies for 16 years, and over the past 23 years, has co-founded two start-up companies. From 1978-1994, Dan spent 16 years with Procter & Gamble, Quaker Oats, and the Drackett companies in a variety of marketing, sales, and general management positions.

From 1994-2009, as co-founder of Changing Paradigms, Dan's team built an \$85M CPG company, becoming a leader in premium private label products within the air care, household cleaners, drain care, laundry additives, and baby care categories. During this time, Changing Paradigms became a key partner with P&G's GBD group leveraging his teams CPG experience to (1) resurrect orphan P&G brands like Downy Wrinkle Releaser, Febreze Laundry Odor Eliminator, and Dryel at home dry cleaner (which was later purchased), (2) build brand adjacencies for the Dreft Brand, (3) share technical knowledge to accelerate Febreze entry in the candle segment, and (4) incubate new concepts for the laundry care group. In 2007, Changing Paradigms was sold to oneCare, where Dan spent 3 years continuing to oversee the Changing Paradigms division.

In 2009, Dan co-founded Nehemiah Manufacturing, whose mission is to build brands, create jobs, and change lives through employment and whole life coaching in the inner-city of Cincinnati. With the support of P&G, Nehemiah licensed the Pampers Kandoo business in September 2009 which was the foundation for the start of the Nehemiah Company. In 2012, Nehemiah acquired the Boogie Wipes brand, a patented saline nose wipe for little children, building the company's presence within baby/toddler care.

In October, 2013, Nehemiah entered an arrangement with Procter & Gamble to licensed 3 fabric & home care brands... Downy Wrinkle Releaser, Febreze Laundry Odor Eliminator, and Dreft laundry soil & stain remover, fabric refresher, and multi-surface spray/wipes. Located in its new 180,000 square foot facility at 1907 South Street in Lower Price Hill, Nehemiah currently employs 180 people, with over 125 employees in the production, warehousing, and office positions, being second chance citizens. Second chance citizens are those that find it extremely hard to find sustainable employment because of having a felony in the background, or a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse leading the gaps in their employment history, or even those who have were homeless for a period of time.

In 2015, Dan led a group that set into motion plans to team with other businesses in providing critically needed jobs for Returning Citizens. In April of 2016, the Beacon of Hope Business Alliance was formally launched, engaging leaders from business, government, churches and related social services. The mission over time is to expose 2,500 new jobs each year to the Second Chance population by creating awareness, providing a proven process and easy access to an ecosystem of social support – so that everyone who wants to work and change their life will be given that chance. To date, over 80 companies are involved in this mission while hiring over 600 2nd Chance citizens. In August, 2019, Nehemiah transitioned the Beacon of Hope Business Alliance to Cincinnati Works, to help take this Alliance to the next level.

Dan received his bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Business School in 1978. Dan resides in Cincinnati with his wife of 40 years and is the proud father of three girls and a 12 year old granddaughter.

Nate Brown

Director of Program Services, Oklahoma Department of Corrections



Mr. Brown began his career with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections in May 2005 as a Probation and Parole Officer assigned to the South Office of Central District Community Corrections in Oklahoma City. He was selected as Central District Community Correction's Officer of the year in 2009 and was promoted to Team Supervisor in 2010 and later to Administrative Manager in 2015. During his tenure at the district level for probation and parole he supervised a number of caseloads and officer types including: probation, parole, interstate, GPS, Diversion, Weed & Seed, administrative and specialty courts.

Mr. Brown was promoted to Division Support Coordinator for Probation and Parole in February 2017 and was selected as the Director of Programs within Offender Services in January 2018.

Mr. Brown currently oversees Education, Cognitive Behavioral Programming, Substance Abuse Treatment, Reentry Services as well as Religious and Volunteer Services for the state's incarcerated population in the Oklahoma Department of Corrections facilities.

Mr. Brown earned his bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice Administration in 2004 from the University of Phoenix and his Master of Public Administration in 2010 from the University of Oklahoma. Mr. Brown has prior service with the Oklahoma Administrative Offices of the Court, the Oklahoma County Court Clerk and in the United States Army Reserves.

Nate Brown
Director of Programs
Oklahoma Department of Corrections

The Issue:

Prisoner reentry continues to be one of the most significant factors as well as a focus for our state as we continue our dedicated efforts to effectively and safely reduce our high incarceration rates. The complexities surrounding the goal of reducing recidivism while simultaneously returning productive citizens after a period of incarceration are extremely varied and wide ranging.

Many factors contribute to the success of an individual returning to society after prison: housing, employment, transportation, finances, social support, legal issues and obligations, medical needs, mental health needs and substance abuse treatment needs. These are issues affecting all inmates released from prison, further compounded by geographic location and socio-economic status. Many inmates have significant anxiety and fear about their impending release, which can be tough to deal with if they have been incarcerated for a significant period of time. The sudden removal of structure that has guided their everyday activity can be quite daunting and in some cases, insurmountable. Things that are relatively simple for an average citizen, such as obtaining a Driver's License or State ID that allows someone to work, can be exponentially difficult for an inmate that has limited resources while in prison and more roadblocks once they are released. As a former Probation & Parole Officer I have had a firsthand view of the types of environments these inmates come from before prison. I also know the varied environments they will be returning to and the challenge some will face. The stigma of a felony conviction and its long term effects can be crippling. It is the goal of everyone invested in reentry to help these men and women overcome these issues for themselves, their families and their communities.

Employment and education are two of the leading factors that will help determine success on the outside. Not just employment, but sustainable long-term, high paying employment is best achieved through educational growth, either traditionally or vocationally. These two issues, combined with a suitable living environment, family focused support, access to mental health, medical and substance abuse treatment and maintenance, will ultimately make the inmate less likely to reoffend.

Oklahoma Corrections Overview:

As of March 31, 2020, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC) had a total of 24,409 inmates incarcerated in 18 state prisons (only 8 of which were designed and built to be prisons), 3 contracted private prisons, 6 community corrections centers, 4 contracted halfway houses and 1 contracted county jail. There are an additional 780 inmates currently in the state's county jails awaiting transfer to the ODOC. In the community, there were 31,659 offenders on probation, parole, GPS or in a community sentencing program for a system total of 57,112 offenders either incarcerated or under the supervision of the ODOC.

In FY 2019 we received a total of 9,384 receptions into incarceration, of which, 1,496 were female and 7,888 were male. In the same year we discharged more than 9,000 inmates from incarceration into the community.

Programming and Reentry in Oklahoma:

With the large volume of inmates leaving our correctional facilities, tailoring reentry programming that is specific enough to deal with all of the issues that an inmate will face once released is a large task. The majority of ODOC's inmate programming focuses on Education, Substance Abuse Treatment, Cognitive Behavioral Programming, Vocational Programming, Reentry Services and Volunteer and Religious Services. These evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and services are provided by department staff, contract staff and volunteers to address the needs of the individual. These programs address the reentry success of individuals that are incarcerated in Oklahoma. Everything we do for an inmate is designed towards their success upon discharge with the goal of not returning to incarceration. All incoming inmates are assessed for criminogenic need, educational level and eligible inmates are assessed for the potential for vocational programming by our partner the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

Our Education Unit is the largest component of Program Services in the Department of Corrections. It is recognized as an independent school district by the Oklahoma Department of Education. We employ a superintendent, 3 principals and more than 80 certified teachers distributed throughout the state facilities. Every inmate coming into the system is tested using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and if there is an educational need, they are placed into educational programming at one of three levels: Literacy (grade level 5.9 or lower), pre-high school equivalency/adult basic education (grade level 6.0 through 8.9) and high school equivalency (grade level 9.0 or higher). The average incoming TABE score grade level for FY 2019 was 7.0 (7.7 for females and 6.03 for males). We had 1,100 inmates receive a high school equivalency diploma from the State Department of Education in FY 2019. In addition to the regular educational classes, our teachers provide Life Skills classes (a reentry focused class), leisure library services at some facilities, among other services as needed by each facility. Additionally, they coordinate and facilitate college programs through many of our secondary education partners.

Currently, we have college programming partnerships with Tulsa Community College, Langston University, Conners State College, Rose State College, Western Oklahoma State College, Northwestern Oklahoma State University and Southwestern Oklahoma State University. Tulsa Community, Langston University and Conners State College were approved as Second Chance Pell schools (SCP) in 2016. Rose State, Southwestern and Western Oklahoma State are approved to be on the second round of approvals for Pell expansion funds. We have plans to expand our offerings through our first tablet based curriculum by partnering with Ashland University of Ohio in the fall of 2020. There is no question that the availability and expansion of Pell Grant funding has impacted our inmate population greatly. There is also no question that we need more resources to help continue this expansion.

In our state, prior to discharge, a well-thought-out pre-release plan is developed with the inmate that provides an opportunity for the inmate to review all their accomplishments during incarceration as well address all of the issues they would face upon release. The plan is developed with the case manager and the inmate so that together they could start to think about what life would look like on the outside. Identifying housing (with family or without) and potential employment opportunities are sometimes the most difficult obstacles to overcome and can often change many times up and after discharge.

Kate Barnard Correctional Center:

Kate Barnard Correctional Center (KBCC) is a 250 bed facility located in Oklahoma City directly adjacent to the ODOC Administrative Offices. It was originally opened in 1972 and has had a number of operational missions and titles. It was converted from one of our community corrections centers to a minimum-security facility in 2017 to help alleviate some of our county jail backup totals for female inmates waiting

to be transferred into the system. It houses a fully functional education program, a substance abuse treatment program and offers cognitive behavioral programs such as Thinking for a Change and Associates for Success. As a female facility in a large metro area, it is also served by a healthy contingency of volunteers providing additional services and programming. Like all of our facilities, KBCC does an excellent job at utilizing the available resources for accomplishing its mission. Due to the facility's recent history as a community level facility, it has a strong history of focusing on reentry and its smaller size lends itself to being able to focus on providing programming on multiple fronts.

KBCC receives a lot of its inmate population from our larger female facilities the medium security Mabel Bassett Correctional Center (MBCC) and the minimum security Dr. Eddie Warrior Correctional Center (EWCC). We initially assessed that many of the female inmates completed their high school equivalency at these other institutions but then were transferred to KBCC where there were no college offerings. In fact, after its conversion to a minimum facility, it became the only remaining female facility that did not offer college programming. As a result, we polled and assessed the offender population and found that more than 80 offenders in the 250-bed facility were interested and educationally eligible for college courses. Langston University, a 4 year university, was already operating at one of our larger male facilities but had a local branch not too far from KBCC in Oklahoma City. We decided that it would be mutually beneficial for the inmates at the facility and the university to establish Pell funded college programming at this DOC site. Since we already had a lengthy and successful partnership with the university, adjusting the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to accommodate this operation was facilitated.

The new program began in the fall of 2019 with 27 students in 3 onsite classes. Classes continued into the spring semester; however, with budget constraints, instructor time was limited and only one course was scheduled. We are in discussions to expand course offering in the fall. One of the more exciting pieces of information stemming from this partnership is that one of our inmates having received her high school diploma at EWCC discharged her sentence and is currently a proud full-time student at Langston University.

To continue these examples of success in our communities we must continue the growth of our college offerings at KBCC and all of our facilities by continuing to work with Langston and any other college partner willing to provide services. The addition of college offerings at this female facility has been a boon to the inmate population and is helping us to address the growing needs of these offenders as they become eligible for release. For some, this allows them to expand the college courses they already have and for others this helps give them the sense that they can achieve more than they have ever before.

Impact:

There has been a strong shift to recognize the needs for successful reentry, but this is only part of the puzzle. While investing and concentrating on the factors that aid in successful reentry, we also know the benefit of placing emphasis on dealing with all of the contributing factors of an individual's success, not only after an incarceration, but prior to an incarceration as well. It needs to be a concerted effort to treat the person holistically instead of focusing on singular components such as education or employment. We know that in FY 2019, 64% of the inmate population had either a history of mental health issues or current mental health symptoms. We also know that a large portion of inmates are managing substance abuse issues and in many cases both. We know many inmates have no place to return to and many of those that do have somewhere to go, may not be returning to the best environment. We also know that many of our inmates have additional trauma in their life that was likely a factor that contributed to their incarceration. For many the system may have failed them before they came to prison, with many of them

failing to complete school or growing up in foster care because of a lack of resources or awareness. Correctional programming can be the trajectory for changing their lives with success for them and their families.

As a department, we are maximizing the resources available in to provide the programming opportunities to every inmate. This includes maximizing any available resource, partnership and collaboration to the fullest extent. It is part of our core mission to encourage positive change in offender behavior by providing rehabilitation programs and enabling successful reentry.

Partnerships, like those with Langston University made possible by Second Chance Pell Fund, help us complete this mission.

Recommendations:

- Conduct studies and funding that supports technological advances in providing educational and employment resources to correctional systems for the purposes of reentry.
- Conduct studies on the types of college programs offered to incarcerated individuals versus the needs of business/industry with a focus on increasing high demand fields.
- Support the Experimental Pell Initiative Expansion and consider ways to aid in funding the project.
- Support efforts to reduce restrictive policies and rules regarding licensure relative to the crime especially in high demand areas.
- Study ways that would allow long distance transfers of releasing inmates to high employment demand areas including interstate opportunities.
- Provide more funding for all-inclusive services and community dedicated to reentry incorporating employment, education and treatment services, particularly in rural areas.
- Research and funding for infrastructure and technology that can promote distance learning opportunities for justice involved individuals, particularly in rural areas.
- Research and expand opportunities for technology sector training, education and employment for justice involved individuals such as coding and software development.

John Wetzel

Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections



John Wetzel, widely recognized as one of the thought leaders in and voices of corrections today, was appointed Secretary of Corrections for the PA DOC in January 2011 by Governor Corbett following a 22 year career in county corrections that culminated in a position of warden at Franklin County jail where he oversaw a 20% population reduction during his tenure. After Gov Corbett's defeat, he was reappointed by Governor Wolf in January 2015 and again in January 2019. During his tenure as Secretary, not only did DOC experience the end of a 24-year average growth of 1500 inmates per year, but also the first population reduction in PA in over 4 decades, with a total reduction thus far of over 4,200 inmates. Secretary Wetzel has guided the Department in restructuring Community Corrections, the mental health systems and significant security enhancements while at the same time, significantly reducing spending. With 30 years of experience in the corrections field, he served as Chair of the Council of State Government's Justice Center's Executive Board of which he is now a member. He is currently the President of the CLA (Correctional Leaders

Association) formerly ASCA and a member of Harvard's Executive Session on Community Corrections. On the federal level, he was tapped by the Obama administration to be the corrections expert on the Chuck Colson taskforce – which was a congressionally created group tasked with assessing the Federal Bureau of Prisons and providing the administration and congress with recommendations on improvement. More recently, he was named by the Trump administration to the congressionally created oversight committee to the federal First Step Act. He is graduate of Bloomsburg University, and recipient of honorary Doctorate degrees from both Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Chestnut Hill College.