

# DPS Hosts Local Reentry Councils

By Sonja Bennett-Bellamy, Communications Officer



As North Carolina begins to roll out its Reentry Action Plan aimed at ensuring that formerly incarcerated people make seamless transitions from prisons back into their communities, it's now turning to the community based organizations that will be critical to the successful implementation of the plan.

Local Reentry Councils (LRCs) are networks of community-based organizations that help people returning from prison find local services such as housing, employment, food, clothing, health care

and substance abuse treatment, transportation and mentoring. LRCs do this very important work to help ease the transition from prison to community in hopes that it will decrease the likelihood of repeat offenders.

"But by the Grace of God," DPS Deputy Director of Adult Correction Tim Moose told a room full of LRC representatives from across the state gathered in Raleigh earlier this month. "But by the Grace of God, each one of us could have found ourselves in the very same places these offenders have ended up. Everyone we touch in our work hasn't had the kind of life, the kind of vision we've had so we have the obligation to work with them and give them the opportunity to change." The meeting, hosted by the DPS Reentry, Programs and Services division was convened so that LRCs from across the state could come together and exchange ideas, work together, train and get the vision about the critical roles they will continue to play in tandem with the state's action plan.

"Thank you for all you do to help build people and strong communities," said Nicole Sullivan, director of reentry, programs and services. "As an agency, we cannot release people if they don't have a plan in place or they will fail. With your help, formerly incarcerated people can actively participate in the reentry process and be successful. The relationships and partnerships you build while here can leverage all of the work we have yet to do." LRC representatives engaged an agenda filled with information to help them tap resources and technical support valuable in continuing their work now and in the future. They also learned the specifics of the state's master plan for reentry, which included the establishment of the State Reentry Council



Collaborative, a cross representation of governmental, community, faith-based, advocacy and judicial representatives led by DPS Secretary Erik A. Hooks. Local Reentry Councils are key stakeholders within the Collaborative and are a critical component in the Reentry Action Plan.

“Governor Cooper supports you and reentry work,” said Darryl Childers, policy advisor in the Office of the Governor. “Governor Cooper thanks you. This is the right time for us all to come together to bring about change.”

This year, more than 20,000 people will be returning to their communities from state prisons. That number will continue to stagger as prison populations increase. The state’s strategy encompasses all of the facets of government and community that are relevant in the process an inmate goes through following imprisonment. Jasmine Rosario has been a DPS probation/parole officer for more than four years. Her passion for helping people is what attracted her to the profession. Now assigned to specifically handle the cases of people who will be released from the Wake County Correctional facility, she sees what a difference she makes in the lives of the people she prepares for release.

“As we begin to re-mission the way we handle re-entry, I see how important it is for inmates to have someone who is there to specifically help them focus on their lives beyond imprisonment. That way, they are ready to meet any challenges they may encounter after they are released.”

“It’s always effective when you can have officers who can reach and attend to the individual needs of an offender,” said Community Corrections Director Tracy Lee. “Now we are able to reach the people we supervise with a better, more solid message that speaks to the deliberate steps that will be taken to help them be successful.”

“With backing from Governor Cooper, law enforcement, the justice system and all of those who have a hand in reentry, including the formerly incarcerated and their families, we now have the right energy out there to make great things happen,” said Sullivan.

