



Cuyahoga County Reentry Review

Clinic Provides Assistance to Returning Citizens with Legal Issues

By Fred Bolotin

People who face legal issues related to their reentry have a new place to turn for advice and assistance. Once a month, a free legal advice/intake clinic is held at the North Star Neighborhood Reentry Resource Center.

Although there has been no formal announcement or advertising about the clinic, word has spread quickly. The clinic, which began in August, has already served about 70 clients. "These numbers clearly demonstrate the need for such a service," notes Brian Lamb, an attorney with the law firm of Thompson Hine, LLP, who is one of the founders of the clinic. The clinic has been staffed by four attorneys, a law student, and a paralegal.

Reentrants often face a wide range of issues that can prove to be an obstacle to getting or keeping employment. In the five months that the clinic has been in place, it has assisted clients with driver's license problems (obtaining or reinstating driving privileges), child support obligations, expungement of criminal record, bankruptcy, and social security issues. Although, thus far, there have been no clients with housing issues, the clinic expects that to be an issue for which the clinic will be utilized. "Often, all it takes is to provide the client with the proper contact information and directions to access the appropriate resource," according to Bill Mooney, a graduating student at Cleveland Marshall School of Law, who has been very active at the clinic since its inception. A few clients have come with issues that are outside the scope of the clinic's mission. When this has happened, the clinic's staff has tried to make referrals to appropriate lawyers (some who are willing to help on a pro bono basis) or to other resources for assistance.

The clinic is held at the North Star Neighborhood Reentry Resource Center, located on E. 55th St., directly across from Oriana House, on the second Friday of each month. The hours are from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. No appointment is necessary; it is on a walk-in basis.

Reaction to the clinic has been extremely positive. As one visitor to the clinic put it, "it's unbelievable. I just showed up and had a lawyer who usually gets at least \$300 an hour to help me for free. He really seemed to want to help." The clinic also can serve as a source of encouragement. Another member at North Star observed that "when you see hot-shot lawyers willing to help for nothing, it makes you that much more determined to succeed and stay out of trouble."

Mooney has found the experience to be educational, as well as satisfying. He has been the initial contact for many who have come to the clinic. He conducts an initial interview and then meets with one of the attorneys to discuss the issues presented. The attorney then meets with the client, with Mooney often sitting in on that meeting.

(Continued on back cover)

Cleveland Lawyers' Initiative on Reentry
Invites all attorneys to help make a difference.

Thompson Hine, LLP
3900 Key Center
127 Public Square
Cleveland, OH

For information or to reserve a space, contact
Brian Lamb at
(216) 566-5590 or
Brian.lamb@thompsonhine.com

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Reentry Reconnection New Programs

By Mary Kelley

A group of grassroots organization have joined together to offer a variety of different programs to help returning citizens. This group is part of the Healthy Fathering Collaborative and is coordinated by Steve Killpack, Executive Director and President of the Community Endeavors Foundation. The five agencies have been longtime members and partners in the Healthy Fathering Collaborative and are dedicated to providing meaningful and cost-effective services to the reentry community.

“Grassroots agencies are easily accessible and are trusted in the community. These programs are operated by experienced people who are passionately committed to their mission and their customers,” Mr. Killpack said. “We are excited about Reentry Reconnection and are eager to show that smaller organizations are out there doing great work.”

Fatherhood Development programming will be offered weekly during the year by the Center for Fatherhood and Family Dynamics. The Center for Fatherhood and Family Dynamics provides resources for fathers and those that facilitate fatherhood initiatives.

Child Support and Courthouse Navigation will be provided every quarter through the K.E.Y.S. (Keep Empowering Your Self) program that is provided by Key Source Pro Se Consulting and Training. Topics will include how-to seminars on expungement, paying past-due child support, establishing legal rights to child visitation and legal mediation. Key Source delivers step-by-step instruction and information about how to self-manage a variety of legal challenges for those people who are representing themselves in legal matters.

A Financial Literacy program will be offered monthly through Harvest Consulting and the Wealth School. These two organizations have a deep history in the community. Topics addressed will include attitudes toward money, understanding credit, types of predatory lending, saving money on any income and gambling.

Finding a job can be one of the toughest things for a returning citizen to do. Many returning citizens find that starting their own business is a satisfying new possibility for employment success. By using their own unique skills and initiative, returning citizens can create economic opportunities for themselves that may not be readily available in the traditional job market. For this reason, a new Entrepreneurial Business Development Series will be presented every month. The program introduces participants to the world of entrepreneurship by teaching them the basic elements needed to develop a start-up business plan. After completing the group education piece, individuals will receive on-on-one support and coaching based upon their particular needs. Classes are weekly and a new session begins each month. This program is collaboration between Passages and the Career Development and Placement Strategies (also doing business as the Rising Above Initiative). Passages is a faith based non-profit community organization dedicated to enriching the quality of life for children, fathers and mothers by providing self-improvement resources to empower individuals. The Rising Above Initiative works with parents who do not have custody of their children to help them become economically self-sufficient.

More information and a complete program schedule are available on-line at www.neofathering.net.

Anyone who is interested in any of the programs must register for them through email at rrginfo@gmail.com.

We want to hear from you...
Your comments are important to us.

Write to us at
Cuyahoga County Department of Justice Affairs
Office of Reentry
310 West Lakeside Avenue, Suite 550
Cleveland, OH 44113
Our website:
<http://ja.cuyahogacounty.us/en-us/office-reentry.aspx>



North Star Neighborhood Reentry Resource Center



JANUARY 2010

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	MetroHealth Broadway Health Center— Screening 8am	*Life Skills Class 2-4pm UMADOP (Clothing) 12pm *Ohio Benefit Bank 9-12pm	*Job Booster Class 2pm *Job Club Class 3pm *HIV Testing/ Screening 4-6pm	*Employment Orientation 1pm *Big Book Discussion 3-4pm Westside Catholic 8:30am (Clothing) *Ohio Benefit Bank 9-12pm	Free Clinic Appointments 12-4pm	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	MetroHealth Broadway Health Center— Screening 8am	*Life Skills Class 2-4pm UMADOP (Clothing) 12pm *The Empowerment Center of Greater Cleveland (Food Stamps) 10am-12pm *Ohio Benefit Bank 9-12pm	*Job Booster Class 2pm *Job Club 3pm *HIV Screening/ Testing 4-6pm *Free Clinic (Health Screening) 4-6pm	*Employment Orientation 1pm *Big Book Discussion 3-4pm Westside Catholic 8:30am (Clothing) *Ohio Benefit Bank 9-12pm	*Free Legal Advice (Pro bono Clinic) 1-4pm	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	MetroHealth Broadway Health Center— Screening 8am	*Life Skills Class 2-4pm UMADOP (Clothing) 12pm *Ohio Benefit Bank 9-12pm	*Job Booster Class 2pm *Job Club Class 3pm *HIV Screening/ Testing 4-6pm	*Employment Orientation 1pm *Big Book Discussion 3-4pm Westside Catholic 8:30am (Clothing) *Ohio Benefit Bank 9-12pm	Free Clinic Appointments 12-4pm	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
	MetroHealth Broadway Health Center— Screening 8am	*Life Skills Class 2-4pm UMADOP (Clothing) 12pm *The Empowerment Center of Greater Cleveland (Food Stamps) 10am-12pm *Ohio Benefit Bank 9-12pm	*Job Booster Class 2pm *Job Club Class 3pm *HIV Screening/ Testing 4-6pm *Free Clinic (Health Screening) 4-6pm *Domestic Violence Seminar 4pm	*Employment Orientation 1pm *Big Book Discussion 3-4pm Westside Catholic 8:30am (Clothing) *Ohio Benefit Bank 9-12pm		
30	31					
	MetroHealth Broadway Health Center— Screening 8am					

*Asterisk indicates on-site services. All other services are at the provider's location.

North Star Neighborhood Reentry Resource Center offers free health screenings and free HIV screenings. We also have vouchers for State IDs and Birth Certificates.

The New Employment Transitions (NET) Program is offered daily with Orientation classes held every Thursday at 1:00 pm.

The Ohio Benefit Bank will be on-site every Tuesday and Thursday from 9am-12pm.

Life Skills classes are available to anyone interested on Tuesdays from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

Help with resumes and job searching are available during regular business hours.

North Star NRRC
1834 E. 55th St.
Cleveland, Ohio 44103
(216)881-5440

Clinic Provides Assistance to Ex-Offenders with Legal Issues (continued from front cover)

Clients seem to have a positive attitude, according to Mooney. "Most of the ex-offenders I have met have been sincerely interested in becoming productive members of our community. On many occasions I've seen the gratitude in their eyes. My impression is that the clinic is a welcome source for many who want to help themselves but who are not sure where and how to start. For many the clinic provides that starting point.

Mooney is very excited about the clinic, and expects to continue his volunteer efforts, now that he is graduating from law school. "The continued success of this project will benefit not only the ex-offenders, but employers, neighbors, family members, and the community at large," Mooney remarked. "I am looking forward to future volunteer work at the clinic and to seeing the short and long term benefits that are sure to result."

Plans are already in progress to expand the clinic this year. It hopes to add assistance with background checks, "so the clients' criminal records can be reviewed and, if appropriate, challenged or modified if they contain errors, as they often do," according to Lamb. If ex-offenders review what is on their records, Lamb explains, "they can be prepared to handle questions in interviews with potential employers, who are likely conducting their own background checks."

The Citizen Circles Concept



Citizen participation and guidance is essential for correctional practices inside and outside institutions. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction has embraced the needs related to offenders returning home from correctional settings and as such one strategy is the implementation of Citizen Circles. The focus is on eight dynamic domain areas: employment, education, associates/social interactions, family/marital, substance abuse and community functioning, personal/emotional orientation and attitude. They create partnerships that promote positive interaction and accountability for offenders upon release. Circle members address risks that contribute to criminal activity by taking ownership of the solution. It is an opportunity for citizens to communicate expectations for successful reentry and help offenders recognize the harm their behavior has caused others. Offenders are able to make amends and demonstrate their value and potential to the community.

Citizen Circles Locations

The Euclid Avenue Citizen Circle

The Church of the Covenant

Kathleen Farkas

11202 Euclid Ave.

2nd Monday of every month at 7:00 pm

216.421.0482 ext. 282

CEOGC

North Star Resource Center

Lewis West

1834 E. 55th Street

2nd Monday of every month at 11:30 am

216.751.1382

Mt. Pleasant

Murtis Taylor Center

Diane Coates

13924 Bartlett Ave.

1st Tuesday of every month at 6:00 pm

216.751.1085

COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS:

Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry

email: ReentryInfo@cuyahogacounty.us

phone: 216.698.2501

To receive a copy of

Going Home to Stay

contact First Call for Help at 216.436.2000

or go online and download a copy at

www.211cleveland.org/pdfs/communityreentry.pdf

