

Persons with Criminal Histories Workgroup
Meeting Agenda/Minutes
June 29, 2020

Attendees: Renee Johnson, Christine Poltawsky, Mary Quinn, James Searcy, Lashieka Hardin, Marcus Reddrick, Michelle Coffino, Melissa Mummert, LaChelle Davis-Moore, Hope Marshall, Erin Nixon

1. Introductions
2. Purpose of Workgroup---workgroup of the CoC; agendas and minutes posted to CoC website; monthly updates to CoC Board
3. Identify challenges this population faces---what are we seeing in our community
4. Select co-chairs and secretary by next meeting
5. Meeting schedule—frequency

Challenges:

Melissa (Re-entry Housing Alliance)---happy to share what they've done. Have standing meetings already around this issue. Policy stuff that is ongoing.

James Searcy (Promise Resource Network)--most people go into prison homeless and it is never addressed. No verified home release plan. Still homeless once they get back to Mecklenburg County. Struggle to find housing. Those with mental health conditions that are not addressed.

Hope Marshall (Mecklenburg County Re-Entry Services)—sex offenders; some housing available but not much; male head of households with children—nowhere for them to go once released and children are placed in their custody. Female sex offenders—no place for them to go. Two predatory housing programs---people are put out to panhandle and have a quota to meet. Older aging men with chronic health conditions.

Mary Quinn (Common Wealth Charlotte)—first month's rent and deposit is difficult, not exhaust their resources immediately—they've come up with a housing opportunity loan---up to \$1000, for 12 month loan or up to \$2000 for 24 month loan. Payments posted to all three credit reports.

Renee Johnson (Triumph Services; City Council member)—lack of housing inventory; landlords not accepting those with criminal backgrounds.

Melissa—

Concerns from those she's worked with:

FRAMING THE ISSUE; This is a CRISIS; No such thing as affordable housing; It's a struggle out there; It's all about the past; "Charged 20 years ago – still having trouble"; "Thirty-year-old conviction and a doctoral degree, and still the charges come up"; Some people need second, third, fourth, fifth chances....Rent is so high in safe neighborhoods; Section 8 [housing assistance vouchers] helps temporarily; [People with records] don't qualify for some resources; A person with a felony is not a

career criminal; [People with records] need choices, different pathways for self-determination; Non-profits get calls every day about reentry homes (not clear on the point here?)

PERSONAL CHALLENGES: Not having a home is traumatic; This is about people; Can't find housing [often leads] to losing [custody] of kids; Children are traumatized; Application fees takes money away from [providing for] children; Rent goes up / stability [goes down]; People die, people lose children;

Christine Poltawsky (National Center on Institutions and Alternatives)---safe neighborhood issue

Lashieka Hardin (Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy): NC Second Chance Act passed last week. This might benefit some of your clients. Feel free to give my office a call or to refer clients to me. Contact: Office--704-376-1600 ext. 510; direct dial number: 980-202-7344

Melissa: <https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/equitable-access-to-rental-housing>

Goals/Ideas for Workgroup:

- Include person(s) with lived experience in this workgroup
- Use this group as case conferencing workgroup to staff difficult cases and share ideas
- Use this group to share information regarding federal grants, specifically grants for transitional housing

Elect Co-Chairs (2) and Secretary:

- Mary Quinn interested in being one of the co-chairs

Other Items:

- Next meeting TBD---July
- Melissa will inform us of next RHA meeting and if it is ok for this group to attend the meeting
- Branden will send email of meeting recap and process for electing two co-chairs and secretary positions.