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IN MEMORIAM
DISTRICT ATTORNEY KENNETH P. THOMPSON
(1966-2016)

Kings County Re-Entry Task Force
Bi-Monthly Meeting of December 7, 2016 – Minutes

Meeting Date:	Wednesday, December 7, 2016	
Meeting Time:	12:30 pm – 2:35 pm	
Meeting Location:	Office of the Kings County District Attorney 350 Jay Street, 19 th Floor – Bob Kaye Room, Brooklyn, NY 11201	
Attendees: <small>(From Attendance Sheet signatures)</small>	<p>AMERICA WORKS OF NY, INC.: S. Goldstein, A. Smitherman BEYOND THE BARS: L. Robinson BRIDGING ACCESS TO CARE: D. Osman BRONX COUNTY RE-ENTRY TASK FORCE: C. McLaughlin BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES (BDS): W. Caines, K. Martinez, S. Zaman BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY (BPL): N. Franklin BROWNSVILLE THINK TANK MATTERS, INC.: R. Robertson BURNING HOUSE PROJECT, INC.: M. Blackman CENTER FOR APPELLATE LITIGATION: S. Karlin CHRIST FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: M. Harris-Small CORNELL UNIVERSITY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION: J. Davis-Manigaulte CHURCH OF GETHSEMANE / PROJECT CONNECT: D. Ehlke, J. Ehlke</p> <p>EAC NETWORK: J. Vaccaro FAMILIES, FATHERS AND CHILDREN, INC: E. Edelman FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS: Dr. M. Gantt, K. Page, E. Rogers FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF CROWN HEIGHTS: Rev. D. Odom THE FORTUNE SOCIETY: K. Samberg, S. Rivera, Ann Travers FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH: Min. C. Royall HEALTHCARE CHOICES: P. Ammendola THE HOPE PROGRAM: T. Hertzberg</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">KINGS COUNTY RE-ENTRY TASK FORCE</p> <p>KINGS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE Eric Gonzalez, Acting District Attorney, Co-Chair Renee Gregory, 1st Assistant District Attorney Christopher Owens, Co-Chair Designate Director, The Re-Entry Bureau Dr. Vanda Seward, Program Administrator/Coordinator Norma Fernandes, Case Manager Andrea Johnson, Case Manager</p> <p>NYS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION (DOCCS) Audrey Thompson, Co-Chair Designate Re-Entry Operations Manager Michelle' Yon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">KINGS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY</p> <p><u>The Re-Entry Bureau</u> Anne Broomfield, ADA for Re-Entry Compliance</p> <p><u>ComALERT</u> Maria Abadia, Program Administrator Marybeth Melendez, Case Manager Kelly Burns, Case Manager</p>

<p>NYC ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN’S SERVICES: M. Dunbar, T. Trammell</p> <p>NYC DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: A. Calabrese, Rev. W. Cato, N. McCarty, E. Testwuide</p> <p>NYS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS & COMMUNITY SUPERVISION: D. Barometre (Queensboro Correctional Facility)</p> <p>THE OSBORNE ASSOCIATION: M. Burstein, D. George</p> <p>PREP FOR PROSPERITY: N. Jenkins</p> <p>PRISON WRITES: J. Hall</p> <p>J. RALLO</p> <p>QUEENS COUNTY RE-ENTRY TASK FORCE: [S. Rivera]</p> <p>REALITY HOUSE: P. Leach, D. Stewart</p> <p>RIGHT HOUSING SOLUTIONS: R. Williams</p> <p>SAMARITAN VILLAGE: M. Johnson</p> <p>SHADES OF WOMEN: S. Reid</p> <p>VERTEX OUTPATIENT SERVICES: P. Henderson</p>	<p>Office of Public Engagement Justine Tomon, Executive Assistant</p> <p>Youth Diversion - Project Re-Direct Jason Jiminez, Job Developer Tyrone Larkins, Case Manager</p> <p>Fiscal Leleah Robinson-James, Grants Manager</p>
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ITEM #	ITEM	DESCRIPTION AND ACTION ITEMS
1	Call to Order	<p>The meeting was called to order by Mr. Christopher R. Owens, KCRTF Co-Chair designate, at 12:30pm.</p> <p>Mr. Owens thanked those in attendance and those who brought “treats” with them to share with the attendees and asked everyone to take an agenda and sign in on an attendance sheet.</p> <p>KCRTF Co-Chair Audrey Thompson was introduced.</p>
2	Opening remarks	<p>Co-Chair, Ms. Audrey Thompson, representing NYS DOCCS, presented the Agenda for December 7, 2016.</p> <p>Ms. Thompson also presented a few introductory remarks regarding DOCCS’s work with “returning citizens”. She stated that she is one of three individuals assigned to develop resources within the Brooklyn region and to connect parolees to services. She thanked all the partners, DCJS and the KCRTF, in general.</p> <p>In 2004, NYS joined an inter-state initiative dedicated to reforming the transition process and achieve more positive outcomes for parolees, including the use of cognitive behavioral interventions, for example.</p> <p>Mr. Owens stated that meeting minutes would now be posted on the www.brooklynda.org/reentry website and not reproduced in hard copy form. If anyone has any challenges accessing the minutes, please contact Mr. Owens directly.</p>
3	Introductions	<p>Those in attendance introduced themselves, their organizations (if applicable), and their interest in the KCRTF.</p> <p><i>Dr. Seward introduced Acting District Attorney Eric Gonzales.</i></p> <p>Mr. Gonzalez stated that he has been with the KCDA for 22 years, most recently as Chief Assistant to the late Kenneth P. Thompson. His family is from Puerto Rico and settled in Brooklyn – first Bedford-Stuyvesant, then moved to Williamsburg, then East New York. The 70s and 80s were difficult in these neighborhoods, particularly with regard to crime. Crime profoundly impacted his life – the “sense of insecurity” as a result of violence as well as the impact of law enforcement on communities of color. His desire to improve the community for his family and friends led him to college at Cornell University and then the University of Michigan Law School – with the goal of becoming a prosecutor. He was grateful to have the opportunity to start his career with the Brooklyn DA’s office and hold numerous positions in the office, ending with the important work that DA Thompson pushed. The office was transformed into a “progressive prosecutor’s office.” Highlights included establishing Conviction Review, addressing the unfair negative impact of outstanding summons warrants, and mitigating the negative impact of marijuana drug laws.</p>

		<p><i>Mr. Gonzalez stated:</i></p> <p>“I say re-entry is very important to me because... If we’re going to be fair and just in the criminal justice system, and we’re going to hold people accountable for the actions they have committed, we have to be fair and just when they return. We have to give them an equal opportunity to be productive members of society. We have to help them with the issues of housing and education and employment. Otherwise, we’re just kind of perpetuating a cycle where they’re going to go back out and not have many options. And that’s what I witnessed in East New York. When my friends came back home, they pretty much had nothing to do. They weren’t back in school; they weren’t able to get jobs. They just kinda’ hung out on the corners.”</p> <p>“ ...So, now that I have this position as the DA of Brooklyn, I’m going to commit the resources to helping your organizations and this re-entry task force be the model of what a re-entry program should look like... I am every committed and very invigorated by the work that your collective organizations do to make re-entry possible.”</p> <p>“My brother was a homicide victim, so I pay close attention to violent crime in our neighborhoods, and my commitment is to protect you and your families and all of Brooklyn. ... “</p> <p>“I just came back from Woodhull Hospital with [Kenneth Thompson’s] wife, Lu-Shawn, where we talked about the importance of colon cancer screening. ... Please encourage the people you work with to get themselves tested. ... Latinos and African-Americans need to get tested earlier and I don’t know that we know that in our communities... Make that part of your message, as part of encouraging people when they’re coming back to us to take care of themselves; this is an important part.. ... I believe that a lot of crime is also a public health issue. And so we need to integrate that message of getting our men, in particular, tested for colon cancer.”</p> <p><i>“We can’t do this work without all our partners... I am really, really moved today because we’re talking about... we’re just about two months since Ken passed and this work ... he started becoming more committed to re-entry work and it’s really a legacy that has to continue. I really ask all of you to do everything you can to partner with this office to make it the best re-entry program in the country.”</i></p>
4	Presentation of meeting minutes: October 5, 2016	Dr. Seward requested that attendees review the Minutes from the October 5, 2016 KCRTF Bi-Monthly Meeting, and contact the Task Force if there were any comments or concerns that required corrections.
5	Coordinator’s Report	<p>Dr. Seward presented the Coordinator’s Report.</p> <p>KCRTF was awarded its funding for the next three years – successfully requesting expanded service capacity and staff. The new service number is 300, as opposed to 250. Posting for new Case Manager will be made soon. Queens now has a CRTF, finishing off New York City’s complement of CRTFs.</p> <p>December 6th was an all-day meeting in Albany for all of the CRTFs statewide. The Medicaid waiver was a prime topic. This would allow individuals to obtain their eligibility <u>and some services</u> pre-release. Another topic was the need to focus more at the regional level, given the different region-based nuances. Brooklyn will grouped with the downstate CRTFs – which includes Long Island CRTFs as well as NYC. There is also a need to continuously educate everyone as there are ever-changing rules, situations and lessons. It is necessary to keep people who have been incarcerated “at the table” for all discussions.</p> <p>KCRTF will be a training ground for CRTFs statewide, particularly with the diversity of those involved and the high-energy level of “caring.” Commissioner Maccarone reiterated his admiration for the KCRTF’s situation.</p>

CBI REPORT (COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS)

Every task force must do at least one CBIs, which are considered important. KCRTF will be including Ready, Set, Work! (RSW) as part of the Thinking For Change (T4C) sessions. The integration of the two concepts is logical and will strengthen the effectiveness of each program for clients. The adjustment is not logistically complicated. Nothing, however, is “one size fits all.”

Qualitatively speaking, T4C results are palpable. Staff members have witnessed positive change in the understanding and behavior of individuals.

Parolees who have received T4C training while incarcerated had a different experience than those who receive the model on the outside. The oppressive “inside” environment changes the perception of the model and its implementation by participants. Accordingly, Dr. Seward will be discussing with DCJS how to allow individuals to participate in T4C both on the inside and on the outside if the Parole Officer and others feel it’s warranted. “Don’t rule people out for outside T4C just because they had inside T4C, if there can be a benefit.”

[There was discussion regarding the role of prison culture with regard to the efficacy of life-changing programs.]

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Case Conference Committee.

At the Albany meeting, there was discussion regarding changes in the case conferencing process. Other CRTFs have different relationships with DOCCS than KCRTF does.

Public Education Committee.

CHS trip to Rikers Island, organized by Ms. Pat Brown, was informative for those who attended. The KCRTF hopes to continue opening eyes regarding the situations and the work that is and needs to be done. Dr. Seward would like to have a KCRTF meeting at Sing Sing.

Mr. Owens noted that the expanded capacity of the KCRTF is a minimum threshold, not a maximum. All of those who need services will receive them either through the KCRTF or through ComALERT.

Dr. Seward stated that the Rehidim meetings at the First Baptist Church of Crown Heights is a rewarding experience and the strong desire for information is inspiring.

KCRTF partnered with the NYC Human Rights Commission on two forums regarding the Fair Chance Act – one in Brooklyn and one in the Bronx.

Kredit Koncepts, a previous presenter and KCRTF partner, now has a self-help kiosk in the Bronx and is expanding their work. A recent open house was successful.

ACCES-VR will remain strongly involved with re-entry, even after Wendy Hersh’s promotion to new responsibilities.

DOCCS had an employment fair that was successful. Ms. Thompson thanked Norma Fernandes (KCRTF) for her assistance and various partners (Center for Employment Opportunities, NYS Department of Labor, NYC Department of Homeless Services and The Doe Fund.) This was the second fair held by DOCCS.

Mr. Owens asked that KCRTF participants send announcements regarding their work and events to the KCRTF for additional circulation.

Mr. Owens also pointed out the 2017 KCRTF meeting dates and the possible need for a new, larger space.

6	Fiscal Report	Not Applicable.
7	Reports / Concerns	There were no reports or concerns raised.
8	Guest Presentations	<p>Dr. Seward introduced the guest presentations with the theme “Us Taking Care Of Us”.</p> <p>BEYOND THE BARS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leslie Robinson, MA, President http://www.rechargegame.com/about-the-company/leslie-r-robinson/ <p>Robinson introduced stress management strategies used by the military to assist the troops. Various handouts pertained to evidence-based strategies to handle internal and external stresses and stressors. Robinson conducted “truthstone” exercise to identify common issues. “Burnout is defined as a state of emotional and physical exhaustion caused by a prolonged period of stress or frustration.”</p> <p><i>Raise hand if statement resonates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I rarely feel burned out ○ I feel burned out most of the time ○ I feel like it is impossible to reduce my stress level ○ I feel hunky dory and in charge of my stress levels ○ Most of my stress I would characterize as emotional/psychological stress ○ Most of my stress I would characterize as not enough time in the day stress ○ I struggle with managing my emotions ○ I am often hard on myself ○ I often tell myself how wonderful I am and what a fantastic job I’m doing with my life (inner child needs support; be your own best friend) ○ I usually put others first ○ I feel valued and important a good deal of the time ○ I am my own best friend ○ I am often my own worst enemy ○ Entitled people really stress me out ○ Inequality and discrimination stress me out ○ I feel understood, appreciated and supported by important people in my life ○ Most of my stress is internal ○ Most of my stress is external ○ I worry about the future ○ I look forward to the holidays <p>“Stress is basically the response we have when we feel like life’s challenges are bigger than our ability to deal with them. ... Stress response can be very damaging over time.”</p> <p>“Our bodies and our minds respond the same way to real or perceived stress (both conscious and unconscious).”</p> <p>“Diaphragmatic breathing helps the body to slow down and allows you to collect your thoughts.” (Intake through nose or pursed lips, hold, then release through nose. Get breath to the stomach.)</p> <p><i>The Serenity Prayer:</i></p> <p>“Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Grant me patience with the changes that take time, an appreciation of all that I have, tolerance of those with different struggles, and the strength to get up and try again one day at a time.”</p> <p>VAJRADHARA MEDITATION CENTER</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matthew Graham Riechers http://www.brooklynmeditation.org/ <p>The Center teaches and practices meditation of various types. Many things go into self-care. People engaged in “helping professions” (or parents) already “know everything” – but the challenge is how to put into practice everything we know. These meditations are contemplative in nature along with practices that are consistent with the contemplative nature in order to optimize the likelihood of successful self care. Stress levels are through the roof because we take on the pain, anxiety, despair and anger that we are exposed to and we need a deep and sophisticated way of managing these phenomena to keep from being weighed down in a destructive manner.</p> <p>“Anger is a world destroyer; anger is a life destroyer.” We need methods to fully realize this, for example, and then focus on that understanding to construct supports that will benefit both ourselves and those we wish to assist. It is necessary and important for us to show that we are relaxed, joyful and patient to those we work with, because if we are not then who can be?</p> <p>Personal experience with the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility environment.</p> <p><i>Dr. Seward then led the KCRTF attendees in creating a “Task Force Mannequin Challenge.” Yeah, we did that ...</i></p>
9	New Business / Events	The next REPHIDIM meeting is on Thursday, February 2 nd at the First Baptist Church of Crown Heights.
10	Adjournment	The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.

NEXT MEETING IS ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2017

2017 KCRTF meetings are proposed for 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm on these first Wednesdays

Feb 1, Apr 5, Jun 7, Aug 2, Oct 4, Dec 6.

Please mark your calendars. Locations may vary.

***Corrections to these Minutes should be emailed
no later than January 30th to OwensC1@BrooklynDA.org***