

## **Back to Rivers**

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A team from CSOSA traveled to the Rivers Correctional Institution in early November to conduct our quarterly Community Resource Day activities onsite. Rivers is located about 230 miles away in Winton, NC. Among those making the trip were Director Paul Quander, Deputy Director Adrienne Poteat, Deputy Associate Director McKinley Rush, Branch Chief Bob Manuel, several SCSOs and CSOs, and some support staff. We were accompanied by a group of Federal and D.C. Government, faith community and non-profit organization representatives. U.S. Parole Commission (USPC) Chairman Edward Reilly and his staff met us there. Together, the members of this large delegation presented a group of over 200 DC inmates being released during the next 90 days with detailed information about the rules and procedures governing their release, as well as resources and services available to them when they get home. The inmates were able to ask and have all their questions answered. Our goal was to empower them with the knowledge to successfully negotiate their freedom.

Community Resource Day is part of CSOSA's ongoing effort to assist the staff and inmates at Rivers with release preparation and transition planning. There are two basic elements of the program. During the morning segment of the program, USPC staff covers the conditions of parole and supervised release. A representative of the Bureau of Prisons follows and covers the rules and responsibilities tied to the halfway houses. Next, our TIPS and general supervision officers explain how they conduct home plan investigations as well as the requirements of community supervision. This segment concludes with a presentation from the Child Support Services Division of the Office of the D.C. Attorney General. Its representative explains their enforcement policies and the benefits of compliance.

The afternoon segment of the program focuses on the critical areas of employment, education, health care and housing. Here, an array of local government and non-profit service providers discuss how to access their resources. Information packets containing handouts from each organization are provided to all of the inmates in attendance. The materials include contact information so that direct follow-up can occur after release.

During the course of this visit to Rivers, several collateral meetings were held with the institution's management team. One involved Rivers' Education Director and the Dean of the University of the District of Columbia's Community Outreach and Extension Service. UDC is seeking to establish a pilot workforce development program for the inmates at Rivers. A second collateral meeting involved Rivers' chaplain, members of our Faith Advisory Committee, and the Cluster Coordinators. They talked over ways to increase the involvement of local clergy in the delivery of religious services to the inmates. In a third meeting, representatives from CSOSA, USPC, BOP and the Rivers' case management team discussed ways to improve pre-release planning and communication.

In addition, while many trip participants toured the prison facility, a small group joined me in conducting an orientation session for a group of inmates selected as candidates for the renewal of faith-based video mentoring services.

Over the past year, three of the quarterly Community Resource Day presentations have been conducted by videoconference originating from CSOSA's Training Center. The use of this technology has made it possible for our staff and our partners to deliver a comprehensive package of resource and service information to the Rivers' inmates without having to commit the time and funding associated with overnight travel. The management at Rivers, however, would like us to conduct Community Resource Day onsite once a year. We will attempt to do so in the future. Through this balanced approach to program delivery, I believe that we can maximize our service providers' participation, while also strengthening the levels of cooperation and collaboration with Rivers' staff.