JOHN CARROLL UNIVERSITY 2016 CAPSTONE PROJECT

HISTORY:
The Cleveland Eastside Ex-Offender Coalition was originally created in April 2001, by a 3 member board of directors, for indigent Cleveland residents in the Mt. Pleasant, Central, Hough, Union Miles and Glenville communities. Currently, CEEC is comprised of a five member board of multidisciplinary professionals from a variety of backgrounds that include medicine, business, corrections, law and justice. Through natural attrition, resignation and/or death, new members are recruited by the nominating committee of the larger body. The Board provides governance and fund development for the organization and supervises and evaluates the Executive Director. It meets bi-monthly and maintains official records of all proceedings. A directory of all board members and their corresponding biographical sketches are maintained in the official records of the board. CEEC mainly targets the state’s northernmost counties of Ohio inmates and their at-risk youth; but any Ohio family of an incarcerated person can utilize programs and services, as the organization is funded jointly by foundations; county, federal and state governments.

Cleveland Eastside Ex-Offender Coalition (CEEC) is a multifaceted, faith based nonprofit organization for services to Ohio inmates and their families and other indigent persons in greater Cleveland. Currently, the agency is located at 12200 Fairhill Road in Cleveland. We provide services in the following areas: prisoner reentry, family reunification, youth and adult mentoring, case management, employment readiness and literacy training. Since 2004, CEEC’s anchor program is Project I.M.P.A.C.T. Prison Video Visitation Program. It is Ohio’s only high-tech prison video visitation program to remove geographical, emotional and financial barriers to sustaining family contact during incarceration at no cost to offenders or their families. Currently, this service is for Ohio Reformatory for Women (Marysville), Trumbull Correctional Camp for men in Leavittsburg, Richland and Mansfield facilities in Richland County and Lorain, Grafton and Northcentral Correctional in Columbus. In 2006, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections and CEEC partnered in an official Memorandum of Understanding to phase in every prison facility in the state as funding is restored.

In April of 2011, the agency became licensed with the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services as an official prevention agency for the entire inmate family. Now, CEEC is partnered with Ohio’s Access To Recovery and the Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services. This project was created to provide peer recovery coaching and counseling to offenders convicted of offenses while under the influence of with a history of substance use/misuse and
abuse. All services and programs of CEEC are fee-free and open to any inmate family or their at-risk youth without regard to race, color, creed, handicap, gender, political/religious affiliation or sexual orientation. Other services may evolve as the need arise and staff capacity is available. Currently, the agency is awaiting a response from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation to provide faith-based residential programming to offenders in the above facilities.

**STAFF COMPETENCY AND CAPABILITIES:**

Caroljean Gates is executive in charge following a 30-year career with the ODRC as a Parole Services Coordinator and Ohio Training Academy trainer. Her Ohio job included supervision of a unit of eight parole officers for community supervision. Day-to-day duties included unit supervision, community protection activities, revocation hearings and investigations. She was also one of only two female teachers in Ohio’s Corrections Training Academy to train trainers. She was also the state’s first trainer for the northeast region when the Americans With Disabilities Act was passed in 1990. Upon retiring from the state in 2001, she organized CEEC and was first in Ohio to introduce and implement the state’s new video-conferenced prison visitation program to reunify inmates with their families and minor children. She has a 10 year history in her 14-year-old agency of providing nonprofit mentoring services to Ohio inmates and their children for which she was awarded a grant by the Ohio Criminal Justice Services in 2008 and in 2010, CEEC received an award for excellence by the Ohio Association for Nonprofit Organizations and an award for offender programming from the Ohio Reformatory for Women in 2006. In 2013, the ODRC approached her to build its statewide mentoring infra-structure for all 32 prisons. Ms. Gates has a Bachelor of Ministry degree as a licensed and ordained minister which increases her capacity to recruit congregations to train as entry portals for mentoring offenders. Reverend Gates has been a conference speaker and teacher for the Ohio Baptist Association of Female Clergy; Junior Pastor for the Churches of God In Christ, licensed missionary and a member of Cleveland’s Women Together In Ministry. She is also Cuyahoga’s only certified trainer with the National Fatherhood Initiative since 2008 and certified mentor trainer with the AMACHI Mentoring Institute since 2006. Currently, Reverend Gates is studying for a master’s degree in Christian counseling at Pillsbury College and Seminary in St. Louis, certification as an Ohio Prevention Specialist (OCPS II) and licensure as a Chemical Dependency Counseling Assistant (CDCA).

**ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE:**

Cleveland Eastside was incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) in April, 2001 by the executive director to bridge a gap in services in Cuyahoga to improve the behaviors of ex-felons being returned. The agency is presided over by a five-member governing board of directors from multiple back-grounds ranging from attorneys to corrections and business professionals and meets bi-monthly for executive oversight and supervision of the executive director. Official committees oversee personnel, human resources and volunteer management matters along with fiscal controls. Official trainings are held to ensure fidelity to the organization’s mission and retreats will be planned going forward. Fiscal oversight is provided by a professional executive banker board member and an on-line accounting system, QuickBooks, is utilized to prevent co-mingling of funds. Accounting procedures are in place and are compatible with generally accepted accounting practices thus ensuring that the award will be managed in accordance with the funder. The executive director and one board member signs all checks which are written by a third party (Office Assistant). An official fiscal manual details the agency’s fiscal activities and records are
maintained in a locked storage. Audits are planned for every seven years and the last audit was conducted in 2007 by Watson and Rice Certified Public Accountants and CEEC was found to be in compliance in all material aspects. The executive director holds weekly staff engagement meetings requiring full staff attendance. Personnel files are maintained for five years and all staff must pass federal and state background checks. The agency has never been cited or investigated for mismanagement, misappropriations or fraud. A financial security bond is also required by the board of directors and liability and risk insurance will be purchased against injury or harm to participants. The greatest affirmation and attribution to the success of Cleveland Eastside Ex-Offender is the Project IMPACT video-visitation program in its replication in the state of Illinois (See attached Chicago Child Care Society Letter – 2010). At the time of this submission, this agency remains the only one in Cuyahoga County specifically targeting children of prisoners for services to improve prisoners’ children’s social, emotional, educational, mental and physical outcomes and wellbeing. More than 300 offenders have received formalized mentoring from community volunteers. Even the children of prisoners are mentored separately; in the agency’s SOS Youth Mentoring Services, from their adult and family mentors for family strengthening in a specialized youth mentoring component that was funded by the Ohio Criminal Justice Services. The SOS acronym stands for Sharing Our Strength.

**CAPSTONE PROJECT GOALS/OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES:**

Cleveland Eastside is an offender reentry agency that is faith-based to assist offenders on their journey to wellness and recovery. This is accomplished via several component initiatives in the agency’s suite of services. The services are designed to provide correctional core practices that are evidenced based to achieve the goals, objectives and outcomes of the populations we serve which are exclusive to incarcerated person and their families, especially their minor children, to prevent intergenerational incarceration.

The over-arching goal of this project is to build a best practice infrastructure to help ex-offenders succeed in the community, the workplace and in life. The following are the goals of this initiative:

**GOAL 1:** In Maslow’s Theory of Hierarchy of needs; the most basic needs that influence behavior include food, shelter and clothing which are at the bottom of Maslow’s pyramid. Uncertainty about the stability of one’s housing erodes one’s sense of security. His theory goes on to indicate that one’s survival needs must be satisfied first and that only then is one motivated to fill higher level needs. Therefore, upon release of participants who are returning to the home they left, video visits to prepare for reunification will provide a seamless return home. For all others, they will have been connected with a housing service prior to release including residence at a Volunteers of America residence. In addition to securing housing, participants will also learn financial literacy to manage finances by establishing a household budget, bill payment, banking and transportation.

**GOAL 2:** Employment is absolutely essential in reducing recidivism because employment is key to securing the resources necessary to enjoying life on its most fundamental level and even provides security for other needs such as housing. Even in the scriptures, it is stated that “Money answereth all things.” Ecclesiastes 10:19. Not only does employment sustain people but it also improves good time management practices especially for offenders who have spent inordinate amounts of time thinking about criminogenic activities. Employment improves self-esteem;
decreases the probability of relapse and re-arrest, provides access to health care and education. Therefore, the goal will be to secure a living wage job within three months of release by making a minimum of three employment contacts and verifying the same with a copy of the application, letter from the personnel director or a business card from the company where the participant went seeking a job.

**GOAL 3:** Although mentoring relationships can and sometimes do end prematurely, regular trainings and support will minimize early withdrawal or the likelihood of failure. This initiative will assist offenders in developing a trusting relationship with gender-specific persons who successfully complete formal mentor training; provide a strong support system for the mentors that help sustain the relationship to prevent “drop-out.” Participants and faith partners alike must attend mandatory initial training and four quarterly 4-hour refresher trainings and simulation training to emphasize the impact of crime, incarceration and release on whole families, community and social connections. In the short-term; faith network partners will mentor offenders in a six-month pre-release relationship that involves planning for release and transitional services, applying for on-line benefits and securing needed identification for community resources and positive parenting techniques for family engagement. Partners are given a “Going Home To Stay” directory thatcatalogues all the services offenders need to be made whole again along with how to access the services. Mid and long term goals include the mentoring partnership for at least one year following release; addressing offenders’ thinking errors that lead to relapse, empowering offenders to enrich their spirituality with active involvement in faith-based activities and access to community resources to ensure success in the workplace, community and life. After one year of post release mentoring, the relationship is eligible for closure based upon the mentor and mentee’s agreement. However, should both parties agree to continue mentoring, the partner understands they are no longer accountable to the ODRC or the mentee. Additionally, network partners will be encouraged to establish victim citizen circles at their sites where offenders can be confronted by their victims or another victim to bring them face-to-face with the harm they caused and the resulting emotional and/or physical problems caused by criminal activity. It is a formalized procedure via Ohio’s Victim Services Offices.

**GOAL 4:** Development of a permanent faith-based network of interreligious partners to be formally trained in mentoring principles in order to provide mentoring services in Ohio prisons for inmates returning to northeast Ohio and especially those coming to Cuyahoga to live in the city of Cleveland in one of six neighborhoods that have been identified by The Urban Institute as Glenville, St. Clair, Central, Superior, Mt. Pleasant and Union/Miles. These are the city’s most economically disparate communities that are infested with drug pockets throughout and those with high concentrations of impoverished youth; adult illiteracy, juvenile delinquency, gangs, crime and drugs. By establishing a network of interfaith houses of worship, the participants who have successfully engaged in the project can unite with a local assembly of their choice to widen their circle of community care.

In view of the foregoing, this agency is seeking the assistance of the Capstone students to build Cleveland Eastside’s infrastructure to enrich outcomes; increase success rates, plan for long-term sustainability, replicate programming, expand community collaboratives and diversify funding. Other capacity building initiatives or recommendations are favorably considered by those students participating in the Capstone project and its director. It is hoped that the project will
review all systems at the agency; correct deficiencies, enhance what is working and identify areas that need re-structuring. Because this agency was just notified of an award from the Corporation for National and Community Services for a VISTA Volunteer, it is hoped that the Capstone students will help train the VISTA who will be assigned to Cleveland Eastside for a period of one year for capacity building. The arrival of the VISTA will coincide with the initial date for the Capstone project which will benefit your students, the VISTA and Cleveland Eastside and its entire constituency.

To achieve the above goals, Cleveland Eastside agrees to provide the following:

1. Attend a Capstone meeting at John Carroll University to be scheduled sometime in July.

2. All Capstone students assigned to Cleveland Eastside will be invited to a tour of the agency, along with all partner agencies including the prison sites, by May 6, 2015.

3. Carol Jean Gates, executive director, will be available at all times to answer questions by the students and in her absence, the business manager or project manager of the agency is empowered to act in her place. However, all final decisions will remain with the director.

4. A Memorandum of Understanding will be jointly established and signed by all authorities in this Project.

5. Upon notification, Cleveland Eastside will provide all necessary information to the Capstone Project Director for distribution to the student group.

6. The executive director agrees to attend the students’ presentations and may bring other staff if appropriate.

7. The agency would also like to profile the Project in the local news and on the agency’s website if appropriate.

8. Finally, Cleveland Eastside Ex-Offender Coalition welcomes the opportunity to be a part of John Carroll University’s Capstone Project and hopes to be favorably approved for participation.