

GENERAL DISTRIBUTION

WEST VIRGINIA
DIVISION OF CORRECTIONS
& REHABILITATION

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SUBJECT: PEER MENTORS

POLICY DIRECTIVE

PURPOSE:

To provide guidelines for the training, selection, and assignment of Inmate Peer Mentors within the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

REFERENCE:

None.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Superintendents with Peer Mentoring programs shall be responsible for enacting Operational Procedures to ensure compliance with this Policy Directive.

CANCELLATION:

Any previous written instruction on the subject.

APPLICABILITY:

All facilities within the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) that have custody of adult inmates. This Policy is available for general distribution and is to be made available for inmate review.

DEFINITIONS:

Mentoring: The act or process of helping and giving advice to another person.

Moral Rehabilitation Initiative: An initiative of the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) to affect positive culture change within DCR facilities through moral rehabilitation services and activities.

Peer Mentor: An inmate who meets the minimum qualifications to be a designated moral

rehabilitation worker who has completed the required training and is approved for assignment.

POLICY:

- I. The role of Peer Mentors will be dynamic according to the needs of the assigned facility, but generally, they will promote moral rehabilitation in the inmate population by example, counseling, and facilitating classes and religious services. Inmates from all faith groups are encouraged to participate.
- II. To qualify as a Peer Mentor, an inmate has either graduated from a DCR Bible College with a Bachelor of Arts degree or equivalent from an institution that is accredited by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or has completed the DCR Certified Peer Mentor Training Program and meets the following behavioral criteria:
 - A. No Class I or II rule violations since completion of Peer Mentor training. (There will be a two (2) year waiting period otherwise.)
 - B. No Class III rule violations within six (6) months of assignment.
- III. The duties assigned to Peer Mentors will be in line with the intended purpose of the program. Peer Mentors will not normally be assigned janitorial, clerical, or service-related work assignments.
 - A. Community service duties may include, but are not limited to:
 1. Intake orientation
 2. Mentoring
 3. Facilitating religious services
 4. Facilitating Moral Rehabilitation classes
 5. Teaching assistants/tutoring
 - B. Crisis related services may include, but are not limited to:
 1. Direct observation support (may not be used in place of mental health services staff)
 2. Inmate family death notifications/counseling
 3. Memorial services
 4. Grief counseling

5. Counseling services
 - a. Offender forgiveness
 - b. Parenting issues
 - c. Presence and availability in housing units (e.g. “tier walking”)
 - C. Peer Mentors normally start at the second highest tier of the inmate pay scale. After six (6) months they will be paid at the highest level if they are meeting facility leadership expectations.
 - D. Peer Mentors will be permitted to use networked computers assigned to the program to teleconference (e.g. Zoom/Skype) with program administrators, DCR Moral Rehabilitation partners, and other Peer Mentor-related conversations.
 - E. Peer Mentors will need access to library (or similar location) space for approximately fifty (50) volumes of reading material as part of the program.
 - F. At a minimum, Peer Mentors will be issued an Identification (ID) card with a blue background. This will allow access in areas other than the inmate’s assigned housing unit and common areas. Superintendents may also issue a designated color t-shirt that will further identify Peer Mentors to staff.
- IV. Facility Chaplains or an appropriate staff member designated by the Superintendent will supervise Peer Mentors.
- A. An inmate is expected to remain disciplinary infraction free as a Peer Mentor.
 - B. A Peer Mentor may be removed from the program if there are disciplinary issues or he or she is not meeting expectations of facility leadership.
 - C. A Peer Mentor may also voluntarily resign from the program.
 - D. Facility leadership will notify the Director of Offender Services or designee when issues arise. The Peer Mentor may be reassigned to a different facility depending on the issues, or the Peer Mentor may be returned to the facility where he/she was sent from.
- V. Because the need for Peer Mentors exceeds the capability of the DCR Bible College to train Peer Mentors, there will be a Certified Peer Mentor Training program at Mount Olive Correctional Complex and Jail; Huttonsville Correctional Center and Jail; Lakin Correctional Center and Jail; and any other facilities designated by the Commissioner.
- A. Application to be a Peer Mentor may be made at any time. Any interested inmate may write the Superintendent asking to be considered for the Peer Mentor program. The

- letter must include a statement explaining why the inmate wishes to participate. To qualify for inclusion in the training program, inmates must be a minimum of three (3) years from possible release through parole or discharge as of the date the training program begins; have no Class I or II rule violations for a period of two (2) years prior to application; and no Class III rule violations for six (6) months prior to application.
- B. The minimum training requirements for the program include:
1. Service training (e.g. book studies of Ruth Graham-authored books)
 2. Emotional intelligence training (e.g. race relations/empathy)
 3. Leadership training (e.g. John Maxwell leadership courses)
- VI. Peer Mentor led religious congregations or service organizations (e.g. hospice, inmate led religious congregations) will be in cooperation with and identified as a satellite congregation/organization of an outside sponsoring congregation/organization.
- A. The Superintendent, Director of Offender Services or designee, and the applicable Assistant Commissioner shall give final approval for the congregation or organization.
- B. The Peer Mentor chosen to lead the inmate congregation or service organization shall be selected by a consensus of the outside congregation/organization leadership, facility leadership and the Director of Offender Services or designee
- VII. The DCR Peer Mentor Review Committee operates at the direction of the Commissioner to provide oversight to the program and ensure its efficiency. The Committee will also coordinate with the Superintendents or designees of the training facility and the assignment facility to approve the selection, assignment, and involuntary removal of Peer Mentors. The composition of this committee may include:
- A. Director of Offender Services and/or designee
 - B. Director of Security Services or designee
 - C. Director of Classification or designee
- VIII. On an annual basis or more often as indicated, the Superintendent-designated program manager of facilities with a Peer Mentor program and the Director of Offender Services or designee will meet to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Recommendations for changes at the facility level will be shared with the Superintendent and at the agency level with the Commissioner/designee for appropriate action. They will review the following:

- A. Monthly program assessments provided by the facility program manager to the Director of Offender Services or designee. This short narrative will describe the type of service, frequency and who performed the community services, crisis management services and counseling services.
- B. Responses from Peer Mentors to annual survey questions, approved by the Director of Offender Services, designed to gauge his or her perception of the program.
- C. Responses from mentees, solicited by the program manager, to questions approved by the Director of Offender Services, surveying his or her experience with the program.

ATTACHMENT(S):

None.

APPROVED SIGNATURE: _____


Betsy C. Jividen, Commissioner


Date