

THE COLLABORATIVE ON REENTRY EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Presenter Biographies June 15, 2009

Sheryl Abel

Struggling with addiction that led to incarceration, Sheryl Abel was trapped in the prison system. One night, while alone and feeling empty, Sheryl cried out to God and asked for his help. He gave her a vision and that vision was hope for the “formerly incarcerated women, leaving the system and leading productive lives.” Her vision became her inspiration for H.O.P.E Inc. H.O.P.E. Inc. is a non-profit organization serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and their children. Founded by Sheryl Abel in 2004, its sole mission is to bring assistance, understanding and love for women to become productive members of society.

Wilder Kendric Berry

Mr. Ken Berry was acquitted in 2000 after spending eight years in prison due to a wrongful conviction. During that time he taught GED classes, continued his own education, studied the law, and assisted other inmates in legal matters. With the pro bono assistance of Winston & Strawn, Mr. Berry’s conviction was reversed and he was granted a new trial by the United States District Court in 1999, on the grounds that his trial attorney had provided constitutionally deficient representation. He subsequently proved his innocence at a re-trial before the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois. Since his exoneration, Mr. Berry has participated in numerous public interest and pro bono matters. He has also been involved in non-profit activities that address correctional facilities issues and civil rights violations.

Ken Berry is a senior litigation paralegal in Winston and Strawn’s Chicago office. Mr. Berry conducts legal research, case review and analysis, and assists attorneys with case strategy, preparation, and trials. He also trains other paralegals. His experience includes working with multiple law enforcement agencies and public information sources, court officials and proceedings, rules of evidence, and documentation in federal and state trial and appellate courts.

Mr. Berry is a youth volunteer and mentor with Junior Achievement and the Dodge Academy on Chicago’s West Side. He has served as a guest lecturer with various Illinois colleges and as a guest speaker for churches and community organizations. Mr. Berry serves on the board for Parents against Guns and Violence, an organization that seeks to address the senseless violence that plagues various communities on Chicago’s South Side. He also sits on the board for the John Howard Association, which has provided critical public oversight of the state’s prisons, jails, and juvenile correctional facilities for more than a century.

Brian Durham

Brian Durham is the Senior Director for Academic Affairs and Career & Technical Education at the Illinois Community College Board. In this role, his office is responsible for the administration of the Carl D. Perkins Career & Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) as well as coordination and approval of all transfer and developmental courses in the community college system. Additionally, Brian has been involved in a number of state initiatives including IBHE’s Public Agenda for College and Career Success, the ISBE American Diploma Project, Shifting Gears, and the College and Career Readiness Pilot Project, to name a few significant ones. Prior to his role in Academic Affairs & CTE, Brian served as the ICCB’s Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy. He also brings a background in WIA Title I programs to the agency.

Brian holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Evansville, and M.A. in Political Science from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and he is currently enrolled in an Ed.D program at the University of Illinois focused on Community College Executive Leadership.

Roberta Fews

Roberta M. Fews started her career with the Department of Corrections in February of 1983 as a Correctional Officer at Stateville Correctional Center and served in various capacities during a span of sixteen years. In July of 1999, Ms. Fews was promoted to a Senior Public Service Administrator where she served as Warden at the Sheridan Correctional Center. In March 2004, Roberta Fews was promoted to the Deputy Director of the Office of Programs and Support Services. Her areas of responsibility include Correctional Industries, Mental Health & Psychiatric Services, Addiction Recovery Services, Environmental and Sanitation Services, Adult Education and Vocational Services, Health Services and the Placement Resource Unit.

Ms. Fews has a Master of Arts Degree in Human Performance and Training from Governor's State University (1996), and a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice and Sociology from Southern Illinois University (1982). Currently Roberta is the Executive Chairwoman of the Women In Corrections – Illinois Conference Committee, Vice President for the Illinois Correctional Association (ICA), A Member of the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCJ), Member of the Illinois Association of Minorities in Government, Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and an active Community Liaison for the Department of Corrections with several Community Groups.

Anne Irving

Anne Irving is the Director of Public Policy with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 31, a position she has held since 1996. AFSCME Council 31 represents 75,000 workers employed by state, county and municipal governments, as well as private sector employees providing public services. This diverse membership requires Anne to have expertise in many issue areas, including corrections, mental health, welfare reform, child welfare, child support enforcement, workforce development, and privatization.

Over the years, Anne has represented AFSCME on many government advisory boards and transition teams, including the Illinois Workforce Investment Board, the Statewide Advisory Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Child Welfare Education and Training Advisory Committee. She is currently a member of the Illinois Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council.

Prior to working for AFSCME, Anne was the executive director of the Chicago Recycling Coalition and an organizer with the Citizens Utility Board. She also served in the U.S. Peace Corps, in West Africa. She is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she majored in political science with a minor in economics.

Terrie McDermott

Terrie McDermott is the Executive Director of the Department of Women's Justice Services. This department was created in 1999 within the Cook County Sheriff's Office to promote and administer the integrated model of substance abuse and mental health treatment programs for women offenders as well as provide training for a gender responsive environment. The Department of Women's Justice Services oversees and directs three programs: the Women's Residential Program; the Sheriff's Female Furlough Program and the MOM's Program. During her 18 years with the Cook County Sheriff's Office, she has been instrumental in administering and implementing a variety of policies and projects for the Sheriff and the justice system.

Ms. McDermott is a member of the Illinois Public Health and Corrections Taskforce, Children of Prisoners Children of Promise Taskforce, Prostitution Alternative Roundtable, Intersystem Assessment on Prostitution Work Group, National Institute of Corrections / Crime and Justice Institute Project: Effective Correctional Management of Offenders in the Community, Salvation Army Corrections Board, Women of Power Alumni Association, Inc. Advisory Board, the Cook County Jail Diversion Taskforce, Mental Health Courts Steering Committee and the NIDA Study.

She is a graduate of Chicago State University with a degree in education.

Christopher Mendoza

Christopher Mendoza has worked for the City of Chicago for nine years. He started out as an intern with Mayor Daley's Summer Program as a Program Monitor. From there Chris took a position with the finance Unit as an assistant where he prepared budgets and reviewed invoices as well as other duties assigned. In 2004, Mr. Mendoza transitioned to the Programs Unit and oversaw programs funded by the Department of Labor which provided job training, employment assistance and supportive services to at-risk youth residing in the North Lawndale and Austin areas.

Additionally in 2004, Mr. Mendoza's department was funded by the City to start a new initiative assisting individuals with criminal backgrounds. Currently, Chris now oversees seven programs with a combined budget of \$6 million. He has had the opportunity to sit on various panels as well as travel to various Correctional Centers throughout the State to discuss the importance of reentry programs. Chris earned a bachelor's degree in 2000 from Northern Illinois University and is currently pursuing a master's degree from North Park University.

Jennifer Philips

Jennifer L. Phillips is a Senior Program Officer at the Joyce Foundation and has worked in the foundation's Employment Program since 2000. Based in Chicago, the Joyce Foundation supports efforts to strengthen public policies in ways that improve the quality of life in the Great Lakes region. The Foundation's Employment Program grants roughly \$7 million per year to projects focused on improving policies that support low-wage workers and their ability to advance in the labor market.

Ms. Phillips worked for the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation from 1995 to 2000, as a Program Officer in the Poverty Program. During her tenure, grant-making for income security, including welfare and employment issues, increased from \$750,000 to over \$5 million annually. Active in philanthropy related to welfare and employment, Ms. Phillips was the co-chair of the Grantmakers Income Security Taskforce from 1997-2001.

She holds a master's degree in public administration from the Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan and bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She lives with her husband and three sons in Evanston, Illinois.

Julio Rodriguez

Julio Rodriguez is the Director of Program Services in the Bureau of Workforce Development for the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO). Mr. Rodriguez and his staff have been spearheading the rebranding of the workforce system and the implementation of a workforce portal (Illinois workNet) to increase access to Workforce Investment Services (WIA) through the enhanced use of technology. Mr. Rodriguez has been at DCEO for more than six years and has been responsible for key workforce initiatives in the department such as the Critical Skills Initiative, the Shifting Gearing Career Pathways project and most recently has worked with other state agency partners, under the direction of the Governor's Office, to develop a program model for addressing workforce shortages in critical industries and increasing the ability of the workforce system to reach underserved populations in Illinois.