

2018 SECOND CHANCE ACT: COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY-BASED ADULT REENTRY PROGRAM GRANTEE

# Freedom Life Ministries Reentry Intensive Program

## Success Story

**Freedom Life Ministries (FLM)—a faith-based, rural organization in Marion, North Carolina—is supporting reentry initiatives and helping individuals who are involved with the justice system successfully reintegrate into their communities.** Reverend Danny Hampton, Executive Director of FLM and chaplain for the Marion Correctional Institution State Prison, works with a large population of individuals who are incarcerated, as well as those referred by probation and parole officers. In collaboration with local organizations and agencies, FLM provides evidence-based programming to individuals preparing for reentry. The program’s objectives are to provide necessities (e.g., food, clothing, housing resources), support services, mentorship, and life skills to prevent recidivism.

Unfortunately, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Rev. Hampton no longer had access to the jails

or prisons. Similarly, recruiting recently reentered participants into the community also proved challenging because probation and parole offices were limited in operational capacity and suffered staffing shortages due to COVID-19.

Despite these challenges, program leaders worked with their Second Chance Act technical assistance coach to find solutions to increase enrollment and ensure participants could access resources and support services. For example, FLM collaborated with the Sheriff’s Department in McDowell County to meet virtually with pre-release residents within the jail. Staff also kept their doors open to meet face-to-face with community participants while observing COVID-19 safety protocols. FLM’s willingness to adapt program implementation helped them achieve program objectives and impact the lives of participants in McDowell County in a positive way.

*“Never lose sight of why you do what you do. Program participants are not just numbers—they are people who matter ... The program process should never determine participant value and potential; the value and potential of the participant should determine the program process.”*

—REVEREND DANNY HAMPTON, FREEDOM LIFE MINISTRIES

Three years after entering the Freedom Life Reentry Intensive Program upon release from prison, Arvin Hicks serves as a Registered Certified Alcohol & Drug Counselor Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities Care Manager with Insight Human Services, a service organization connected with the North Carolina Department of Adult Corrections.

*“I cannot express how thankful I am for the many ways Freedom Life helped me rebuild my life as I came back into society. From how they cared for my needs, to their instruction, accountability, and mentoring, my life is different today because of the Freedom Life Reentry Intensive Program. I thank God for Freedom Life.”*



—ARVIN HICKS



## Lessons Learned

**FLM staff believe a strong, faith-based orientation bolsters the belief that the lives of men and women impacted by the justice system matter deeply.** Grounded in their faith, FLM staff is committed to doing everything possible to support the men and women who are involved in the justice system, despite obstacles like COVID-19.

### What worked?

- Treating participants with value, respect, and individuality, and having a systematic process for identifying individual needs and effective case planning
- Building consistency and flexibility into program engagement
- Balancing goals with flexibility during program implementation
- Planning, in collaboration with the Second Chance Act technical assistance coach, around community engagement and adapting curricula
- Connecting program participants to community resources to create a robust community networking and support process
- Implementing Motivational Interviewing with prerelease individuals, resulting in an immediate, significant increase in program enrollment and engagement among those referred from probation and parole officers

### What did not work?

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, FLM could not recruit and train the full number of mentors needed to be effective in providing participant support, which hindered program potential. Case managers were required to play a dual role of case manager and mentor, which created stress on the case managers and program process and impacted their effectiveness.

### What's next?

**FLM will continue to work with local agencies, organizations, and stakeholders to coordinate reentry services.** FLM has grown substantially in financial capacity and sustainability. The program currently has multiple funding streams and is continuing to cultivate new financial

growth, sustainability, and capacity. It plans to expand the pre-release jail engagement to include additional counties and fund a community liaison to help bridge gaps, engage, and more effectively serve Black and Latinx populations and increase outcomes related to racial equity within reentry.