



**Community Change Center**  
*Fresh Starts Food Truck and*  
*Community-Based Reentry Program*

## **Problem**

The Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) reports that recidivism in Indiana, or the return of individuals to incarceration within three years of their release from prison, is at approximately 30%. This statistic does not include individuals in jails, juvenile detention centers, or prisons not operated by the IDOC. The recidivism rate among all carceral facilities in Indiana is estimated to be closer to 75%.

One prominent barrier to successful reintegration into the community is substance use disorder, which impacts a majority of the incarcerated and formerly-incarcerated population. The National Institutes of Health reports that approximately 85% of the prison population has an active substance use disorder or were incarcerated for a crime involving drugs (NIH 2020). These statistics are similar among jail populations. Relatedly, incarcerated individuals struggling with opioid use disorder are at a significantly higher risk for overdose upon their release from incarceration. Therefore, treatment during and after incarceration must include comprehensive services, such as behavioral interventions, medication, employment, and housing opportunities (NIH 2020).

Gainful employment is another critical factor for successful reentry back into the community. Without employment, a majority of people will become incarcerated again. However, fulfilling this need is more difficult when the population also struggles with mental health, substance use, financial insecurity, unaddressed and untreated trauma, and a lack of positive coping skills. For those struggling with achieving and maintaining long-term sobriety, it is often difficult to recover without a change in circumstances, especially for those struggling with additional barriers such as mental health, housing instability, justice involvement, and/or a lack of support. When employers do decide to hire individuals with felony convictions on their record, such barriers often make it less likely that these individuals will successfully maintain their employment long-term. An innovative, comprehensive solution is necessary to break this cycle of opioid use, incarceration, and loss for many of our most vulnerable community members.

## **Solution**

The Community Change Center's Fresh Starts Food Truck will provide hope, supportive employment, workforce training, therapeutic services, and wraparound case management to allow those impacted by opioid use and related barriers to heal and to rebuild their lives. Adding to the uniqueness and enhancing the impact of the Fresh Starts Food Truck in reducing stigma attached to justice system involvement is the collaboration between the Community Change Center and the justice system in Northwest Indiana. The food truck will primarily cater to justice system employees, such as the local jail system, law enforcement agencies, probation office, and court house, therefore allowing governmental employees to support their clients and former clients in their work to create better, more productive lives for themselves. The opportunity for both clients and employees to view each other in a more positive light will promote a shift in culture within the justice system by fostering positive relationships between individuals working within the system and those who have been incarcerated. These positive engagements and relationships will allow for long-term transformation of the justice system into a more rehabilitative process, in addition to supporting the employment and goals of justice-impacted community members.

The Community Change Center has partnered with PACT's Recovery Connection in order to expand the impact of the Fresh Starts Food Truck initiative and to launch community-based reentry services in Porter County. The Community Change Center will begin offering case management services and support for justice-involved individuals at Recovery Connection. With sufficient funding, the Community Change Center will also launch a peer-led mentoring program for young adults who are high-risk for becoming incarcerated. The Community Change Center's Reentry Program Director will be responsible for overseeing the employees of the Fresh Starts Food Truck and their case management and therapeutic services, the mentoring program, and the development of Porter County's first Reentry and Recovery Center.

## Connection to Health First Indiana Key Performance Indicators

- **Trauma and Injury Prevention:** Providing case management services and connecting clients with therapeutic services and peer support will decrease the likelihood that they will engage in high-risk behaviors.
- **Access to and Linkage to Clinical Care:** The Reentry Program Director will connect clients with both mental and physical health care and will help them address any barriers to accessing such services.
- **Lead Case Management and Risk Assessment:** The Reentry Program Director will provide case management services to the clients but will also provide clients who have children with resource information to better care for their families. This information will include services provided by the Porter County Health Department, such as lead testing and case management.
- **Chronic Disease Prevention:** The Reentry Program Director will connect clients with physical health care, including referral information to the Health Department and primary care providers who will provide them with information on obesity-related and other chronic disease prevention.
- **Vital records:** Due to the transience experienced by the justice-involved population, many formerly-incarcerated individuals do not have their vital records. The Reentry Program Director will assist clients in attaining these documents.
- **Food Protection:** The Fresh Starts Food Truck will work proactively and collaboratively with the Porter County Health Department to ensure that the food served on the truck is safe.
- **Tobacco and Vaping Prevention and Cessation:** The Reentry Program Director will connect clients with physical health care and will provide them with education on the dangers of tobacco and vaping. Case management services provided will include referrals to the Tobacco Education and Prevention Coalition for individuals who are using tobacco and/or vapes.

## **Budget**

### ***Food Truck Launch***

Food Truck: \$55,000  
Truck Wrapping/Outfitting: \$10,000  
Food (3 months): \$4,500  
Paper Products (3 months): \$2,000  
Serving Equipment: \$3,500  
QuickBooks: \$750  
Accounting Services: \$5,000  
**Total: \$80,750**

### ***Reentry Program Director (Will provide case management to food truck employees, launch young adult mentoring program, and provide community-based reentry services)***

Reentry Program Director: \$55,000  
FICA: \$4,400  
**Total: \$59,400**

### ***Reentry Programming***

Office Supplies: \$4,500

**Project Budget Total: \$144,650**

### ***Funds Raised***

Fresh Starts Food Truck Fundraising Campaign: \$91,000

***Funds Needed for 2025: \$59,400***

\*Would allow for \$5,750 in campaign funds available to hire Reentry Program Director in 2024

### ***Sustainability Plan***

- Fresh Starts Food Truck Profits: Truck is estimated to be self-sustaining after 3-4 months
- Recovery Works (upon Medicaid provider approval): Will be able to bill for case management services
- Porter County Community Foundation/Anderson Foundation: Predicted to provide startup funds for new programming at community-based reentry center

Goal: Self-sufficiency for the Fresh Starts Food Truck and Community-Based Reentry Center after 2025

### **Community Change Center Overview**

The Community Change Center: WeAreOne, Incorporated was formed in 2019 in order to address high incarceration and recidivism rates among justice-involved individuals, beginning in Northwest Indiana and expanding over time. Approximately 95% of the 2 million people incarcerated in America will eventually return to our communities. An estimated 75% of them will be rearrested within five years of their release from incarceration. By building relationships with individuals during their incarceration and providing comprehensive reentry services upon their release, the Community Change Center is working to decrease crime and recidivism rates in the area.

Currently, the organization operates two transitional living reentry homes in Gary, Indiana, where men reside post-incarceration while they attain their education and/or employment and save money to move into their own housing. Additionally, the Community Change Center operates adult education classes in the Gary community for adults who still need to attain their high school equivalency. In Valparaiso, the organization operates a Unity Cafe, where community members may come to participate in support groups, free weekly meals, case management, and a sense of support and community. The Unity Cafe provides such services to approximately 80

people each week. Within Westville Correctional Facility, located in LaPorte County, the Community Change Center facilitates a weekly reentry group in the minimum security unit for men who are scheduled to be released from prison within the next year. The Community Change Center's presence within the Valparaiso community via the Unity Cafe significantly increases the likelihood that those struggling with substance use disorder and/or justice involvement will continue to seek services from the organization.

## **Contact Information**

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