

S.T.E.P.S. Program

Supporting Transitions by Engaging in Parolee Sponsorships

What is the purpose of the S.T.E.P.S. Program?

A significant percentage of parole-eligible candidates in Virginia are not approved for parole. In many cases, this is due to the lack of evidence to the Parole Board that the individual will have a support system upon release that would improve the likelihood of his successful re-entry to the community and reduce the risk of re-incarceration. Furthermore, due largely to structural racial inequities in our society, a disproportionate number of inmates are people of color. Our goal is to support a carefully-selected Returning Citizen through the parole and re-entry process, and engage in mutually meaningful relationships that benefit all participants and the community.

STEPS Recommendation, Vetting, and Selection Process:

1) Recommendations received from one or more of:

- Kingsway Prison Ministry
- Department of Corrections Counselor
- Parole Board members (through Matthew and Bernadette)

2) Materials sent to candidate:

- STEPS application
- STEPS brochure

3) Completed materials received:

- STEPS Application
- Letter(s) of Recommendation
- Report from Prison Describing everything the DOC has on the Candidate

4) Meeting with Tuck, Susan, David, Anna and mentors (or email votes) to:

- Decide whether or not to proceed with the vetting process
- Set up a conference call if decision is to proceed
- Decision about candidate selection following conference call

Recognizing how systemic racism has contributed to incarceration, we plan that at least one of the two selected candidates is a person of color.

After selection, what is next? A prison visit with the candidate will be planned, which will be followed up by continued communication through mail. Volunteers will work with the candidate while in prison, with the parole board, attend parole hearings, and engage with the Returning Citizen when in Lexington.

What does a Home Plan look like for the Returning Citizen? A Home Plan will include finding a job, lodging, utilities, transportation if needed, and a group of mentors to develop relationships.



How will the program support the Returning Citizen? Food will be provided by RARA every two weeks as needed. Clothes will be contributed by the Community Closet at Christ Church in Buena Vista. Activities in the community that interest the Returning Citizen will be identified. The church will pay for lodging and utilities for the first three months in Lexington. The church will also provide a cell phone for six months. The church will submit quarterly reports to the parole officer of the Returning Citizen. The relationship will last for one year.

What about liability? Neither Grace Episcopal Church, Lexington, VA nor any of its affiliates will assume responsibility or be held liable for any other conditions associated with the candidate. This includes, but not exclusively, loss of job, lodging and utility expenses beyond three months, hospitalization, sickness, violation of parole requirements, or commission of a crime. Grace Episcopal Church will continue counseling and emotional support for the candidate throughout the duration of the program.

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” Matthew 25:40