



Commonwealth of Kentucky Justice & Public Safety Cabinet

Andy Beshear, Governor

Justice Mary C. Noble, RET., Secretary

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Contact: Morgan Hall

502-229-8417

Morgan.Hall@ky.gov

State Agencies Team-up to Provide Identification Cards for State Inmates

*Partnership with business community removes key barrier for
Kentucky's justice-involved population*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Feb. 5, 2021) - Today, the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet announced the launch of a two-year project developed through a multi-agency collaboration to provide state ID cards for Kentucky's justice-involved population. The joint partnership between the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet and Transportation Cabinet, with funding assistance from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, will allow inmates being released from state custody to walk out of prison with a state ID card in hand.

Justice and Public Safety Cabinet Secretary Mary C. Noble said leaving prison without an official form of state identification is a significant barrier that the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet and Department of Corrections have been working to solve for many years. Without an official state ID, the justice-involved population

faces many hurdles preventing successful reintegration into the community such as obtaining housing, employment, and financial resources.

“Early last year, we began working with Gov. Beshear to correct this continuing issue,” said Secretary Noble. “Our cabinet partnered with the Transportation Cabinet, which oversees legal IDs and drivers’ licenses, and together we strategized about how we could quickly and effectively provide this basic necessity to inmates as they are released from prison. We were shortly joined in these efforts by the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. This collaboration has provided a very positive result for our state.”

In addition to providing financial support, the Chamber’s “Second Chance Employment Guide” will be provided to inmates upon release with their state ID.

“An identification card is key to securing employment, housing, transportation, and other basic needs,” said Ashli Watts, President and CEO of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. “No Kentuckian should have to show up to a job interview with a mug shot as their only form of ID. We know of nearly 8,000 Second Chance Jobs, and Kentucky businesses need this talent today. The Kentucky Chamber is proud to help remove the ID barrier and connect our returning citizens with a fair chance at integrating back into society and the workforce.”

The project will begin as a pilot in four sites that include three prisons: Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women (KCIW) in Shelby County, Western Kentucky Correctional Complex (WKCC) in Lyon County and Eastern Kentucky Correctional Complex (EKCC) in Morgan County. The Transportation Cabinet will have portable units on-site at the prisons to process ID applications pre-release. The fourth pilot site is the Warren County Regional Jail. State inmates housed in this facility will have their ID applications processed pre-release at the local regional Department of Transportation office in Bowling Green.

Transportation Cabinet Secretary Jim Gray said IDs and driver's licenses issued by the Cabinet every day are one of the most trusted credentials a citizen can have to conduct routine life tasks.

"We are honored to play a role in executing this forward-thinking project. It is a win-win for our cabinet to pilot innovative ways to issue state credentials remotely while helping inmates transition into civilian life," said Secretary Gray. "Our team will go on-site to the prisons with new portable units that offer the same functions as a regional licensing office. This project is one of the best examples of Team Kentucky, and I am proud to be a part of it."

The six-month pilot begins this week for inmates scheduled for release in March and April. After the initial pilot, the goal is to expand statewide to the remaining state prisons and interested county jails. The Department of Corrections (DOC) estimates over 3,500 individuals will be released from state prisons back to their local communities during the two-year project. Having an ID in hand will provide a permanent long-term solution to assist the justice-involved population with successful reintegration into the community as they obtain employment, find housing, receive financial assistance and access additional needed services. The ID will also assist released inmates who want to obtain drivers licenses on their own.

"The Department of Corrections is pleased to see this initiative finally come to fruition," said DOC Commissioner Cookie Crews. "This project builds on years of work that DOC has put in place to assist the justice-involved population start off on a positive footing when returning to society. Based on data from other states, we know that when proper identification is provided to those exiting the criminal justice system, recidivism is reduced, which produces a positive outcome for the community at large, and that's something we can all agree is a good thing."

The two-year project is supported, in part, by the Kentucky Opioid Response Effort (KORE) through a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Grant awarded to CHFS' Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities.

“The resources a person has to find and sustain recovery are a priority of the Kentucky Opioid Response Effort,” said Dr. Katherine Marks, project director for KORE. “As individuals leave correctional facilities, it is imperative they have supports needed to overcome obstacles associated with re-entry – as well as recovery from substance use disorder and opioid use disorder. This pilot project helps address a critical need by reducing barriers to accessing life-sustaining supports, such as employment and housing, because of lack of identification.”

The contributions from KORE and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce allows the Department of Corrections to do this project without requiring state funding.

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