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Innovative new collaboration to “Flip the Script”

African Americans exiting the criminal justice system will have support to succeed

(Portland, OR) Central City Concern (CCC), a Portland nonprofit that provides comprehensive solutions to ending Portland homelessness, serves 13,000 people a year, including some leaving the criminal justice system. They’ve found African Americans who don’t have solid employment and housing are more likely to reenter the justice system, compared with people who have a job and home. Today at Old Town Recovery Center, CCC, along with the Joint Office for Homeless Services and Multnomah County’s Department of Community Justice (DCJ), announced Flip the Script, a new program to end the cycle of incarceration for our African-American residents.

“We assessed our outcomes and learned African Americans exiting from a criminal justice program without employment or housing had a 36 percent chance of re-entering the system,” says Freda Ceaser, CCC’s Employment Access Center program manager. “We’d like to lower that number.”

CCC’s Flip the Script program will provide housing, cultural peer support and an employment specialist to support African Americans’ reentry into the community when leaving a criminal justice program. “These are key things people need to engage back into the community. I’m hoping Flip the Script will impact the system in an authentic way,” says Ceaser. The program should serve about 150 people in the next year.

CCC is partnering with DCJ to identify and support candidates for the program. “We know that a stable home and steady work are the foundation for a successful life,” says Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury. “For too long, our criminal justice system has focused on punishing people, especially people of color, instead of investing in their success. This collaboration will change lives.”

Flip the Script is a partnership of public and private resources. DCJ will use funds the City and County Joint Office of Homeless Services has designated to “decrease the disproportionate incarceration (jail) and use of emergency shelter for people of color.” CCC received a grant from



the Meyer Memorial Trust. For more information about CCC programs, visit centralcityconcern.org. To learn about DCJ, visit multco.us/dcj.