



Office of the State  
Superintendent of Education



ANNUAL REPORT

2020

The DC ReEngagement Center (REC) is a “single door” through which youth ages 16-24 who have dropped out of secondary school can reconnect to educational options and other critical services to support their attainment of a high school diploma or GED. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) opened the REC in fall 2014 with strong support from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, the Department of Employment Services, Raise DC’s Disconnected Youth Change Network, schools, community-based organizations, and other key partner agencies. The summary below highlights DC REC accomplishments in 2020 and the end of 2019, sharing the many successes of the DC REC team amidst the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. During this time, DC REC staff worked diligently to maintain a high level of engagement with existing clients, while also establishing additional supports to support both existing REC clients and newly identified disengaged students in the District.

OSSE	OSSE-DC REC
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mission</b></p> <p>As DC’s state education agency, OSSE works urgently and purposefully, in partnership with education and related systems, to sustain, accelerate, and deepen progress for DC students.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mission</b></p> <p>As DC’s Reengagement Center (REC), we work urgently and purposefully, in collaboration with educational stakeholders and youth-serving organizations to ensure the successful reengagement of opportunity youth in the District of Columbia.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Vision</b></p> <p>DC will close the achievement gap and ensure people of all ages and backgrounds are prepared to succeed in school and in life.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Vision</b></p> <p>The REC will assist in helping close the achievement gap by increasing the amount of reengaged youth in the District by supporting them with educational placement and academic completion for preparation to succeed in post-secondary education and career-readiness, thus decreasing the number of opportunity youth in the city.</p>

	FY 19 <sup>1</sup>	FY 20 <sup>2</sup>	To Date <sup>3</sup>
<b>Full Intakes</b>	249	109	1,493
<b>Enrollment</b>	191	85	1,139
<b>Percentage Conversion</b>	-	-	<b>76.3%</b>

1 Data retrieved Dec. 18, 2019 for FY 2019. (Oct. 1, 2018 - Sept. 30, 2019)

2 Data retrieved Oct 5, 2019 for FY 2020. (Oct. 1, 2019 - Sept. 30, 2020). This fiscal year reflects the impact of the public health emergency (Covid-19).

3 Data retrieved Oct. 5, 2020 for full intakes and enrollments that have occurred since the DC ReEngagement Center opened in Oct. 2014.

## DC REC LIVE



More than  
**850**  
total participants<sup>4</sup>

\*duplicated count (of REC staff, special guests and youth via Zoom or call in)

**36**

Special Guests

(Attorneys, Police Officers, Mental Health Professionals, Celebrities, and other government agencies)

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

Outreach  
and client  
contact calls  
made to  
more than

**1,500**

disengaged  
youth



More than  
**1,000**  
successful client  
contacts



Met virtually  
with **20** different  
agencies to enhance  
partnerships



Implemented The Learning Circle (TLC) with **46 participants** for integrated learning and social engagement

More than  
**50** individuals  
requested  
ReEngagement  
after being  
disengaged

<sup>4</sup> As of December 31, 2020



Behind the scenes, the OSSE DC ReEngagement Center geared up for a great new year with additional support staff, interns and new internal hires to further promote and fulfill the mission of the REC. Our agency strategic plan pillars and core values continue to be the foundation of our work.

### STAFFING & HIRING

- September 2019 New Hires
  - Onboarding of new Director, Veronica Simmons
  - Promotion of Specialist to Deputy Director, Roderic Irby Jr.
- February 2020 New Hires
  - Lafayette Dublin, Specialist
  - Gregory Palmer, Specialist
- Interns & Support Staff
  - Clinton Murchison, Support (DYRS)
  - Marie Ewart, Intern (DHS)

**Focus on Students.** We believe in the potential of all DC students - from our infants and toddlers to our adult learners - to learn and achieve at high levels. A critical part of our role as the state education agency is to ensure greater equity in outcomes for our students, by accelerating progress for those who are furthest behind.

### CLIENT ENGAGEMENT

DC REC completed more than 900 cold calls to inactive clients for possible reengagement.

DC REC clients participated in several focus groups with partners, including the following:

- Martha's Table (CBO)
- Metro Transit Police Department (government agency)
- Education Forward (nonprofit)
- National League of Cities (stakeholder)
- Deputy Mayor for Education (government agency)

### PULL UP, SHOW UP, POP UP

Having identified the need to be visible in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic, the DC REC Outreach and Recruitment Team set-up pop-up shops in the community to provide face-to-face services for our clients and partners every Wednesday during summer 2020.

### C.O.R.E. (COUNCIL OF REAL EXPERIENCES)

The DC REC developed a youth-led action board to ensure that youth voice would be included within our planning processes, implementation phases and thus, embedded in our work. The C.O.R.E, a youth action board, was established to meet that need. Members meet monthly to discuss relevant policies, practices, and aspirations they have regarding opportunity youth. These youth exhibit leadership qualities and are charged with exercising their collective voice to explore opportunities, challenge norms, and ensure that equity and access is made available to every youth.

### POST-SECONDARY AND CAREER PATHWAYS PROGRAM (PCPP)

In alignment with the Postsecondary and Career Education Division (PCE) priorities, the DC REC aimed to ensure that clients were provided the tools and resources necessary to support college and career readiness after credential completion. The PCPP allows clients to explore higher education opportunities, career counseling, career pathways and exposure to scholarships/internships opportunities.

**Organizational Excellence.** We hold ourselves and our colleagues to high expectations. We focus on getting the details of our core work right, and developing systems that will make it possible for us to sustain excellent work over time. We act with a sense of urgency and balance this with the need to bring good judgment and make wise decisions.

**Determination.** We are relentlessly focused on finding solutions and paths forward, and bring creativity, innovation, and skill in navigating and addressing barriers to do so. We are committed to learning and continuous improvement. We constantly strive for a higher level of performance in all our work.

### QUICKBASE REVAMP

An in-depth review of the current REC QuickBase application was completed with the intention of analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This review and analysis was performed with REC leadership, PCE leadership, Policy, and Data, Assessment and Research. This work will be ongoing in 2021 with the business process reengineering meetings to revamp QuickBase.

### VIRTUAL TEAM RETREAT 2020

The purpose of the DC REC Virtual Team Retreat 2020 was to promote team building, professional development and growth, and strategic planning to support the work of the DC REC. This four-day experience allowed each staff member to participate in a virtual team building experience, professional development, and planning via Microsoft Teams. This opportunity consisted of key speakers, team-building activities, personality and work-style assessments, and testimonials to solidify DC REC annual goals, work plans and priorities.

### FY 2019 CUSTOMER AND PARTNER SATISFACTION SURVEY

The DC REC conducted its first customer service satisfaction surveys for both partners/stakeholders and clients who interacted with the DC REC or were served by the DC REC during the 2019 year. The intent was to receive feedback in the following areas: customer service, communication, referral to educational services, referral to partner services, and partnership support. The survey results and snapshot were released in September 2020. This survey will be conducted on an annual basis.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

The DC REC established a social media team to further manage social media initiatives and social media site management on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The social media team created a social media strategy inclusive of staff training, account management, and content creation. The DC REC was able to recover and reactivate the DC REC Facebook account allowing more visibility on major social media platforms allowing the opportunity to increase exposure and reach to students for reengagement.





**Partnership.** We strive to understand the needs and perspectives of our stakeholders, and we work in partnership with many others to support DC students and families. We are committed to working with empathy, transparency, and humility. We are mindful of the trust placed in us to administer services fairly and honestly and operate with the highest standards of integrity and professionalism.

#### YWCA YOUTH DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM

The DC REC's partnership with the YWCA assisted with the enrollment of students in YWCA's distance learning program. This effort supported student recruitment and enrollment, data counts inclusive of technology surveys, weekly check-ins, GED Ready vouchers, and yielded a youth graduate.

#### NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES (NLC) CONFERENCE

The DC REC team presented at the 2020 Annual NLC Conference (virtual). The DC REC topic presented was as follows: Empowering Student ReEngagement through Virtual Platforms & Strengthening Partner Relationships. The conversation focused on client engagement, building stronger partnerships, and building trust and opportunities for clients.

#### BUILDING STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS (BSP)

The DC REC's Building Stronger Partnerships initiative was created as an opportunity to enhance and strengthen communication with partners during the telework transition. BSP, hosted 16 meetings with participating partners, served dual purposes for the DC REC team. BSP provided DC REC the opportunity to connect with partners collectively to network and share resources, collectively discuss barrier remediation, and share in community opportunities as an effort to strengthen and build on our existing partnerships.

#### PARTNER RELATIONS & COLLABORATION

DC REC Team members were active participants in advancing the mission for the following organizations:

- Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (Distance Learning for Title XVI youth and Support Staff Intern);
- Interagency Council for Homelessness (Youth CAHP, Youth Outreach, and Policy);
- Deputy Mayor for Education (Youth Working Group & Safe Passage Workgroup);
- Life Enhancement Service (in-house mental health support);
- Executive Office of the Mayor (Office of Neighborhood Safety & Engagement);
- Department of Human Services (Zoe's Doors and Support Staff Intern);
- Department of Employment Services' (Office of Youth Programs: Youth Earn and Learn Program for KBEC Group Enrollment); and
- Department of Human Services (Support Staff Intern).

**Teamwork and Collaboration.** We believe in the importance of diversity in many forms and believe that it strengthens our team and our work. We value and care about each other, operate with a generosity of spirit, and inspire, challenge, push, and support each other to be our best. We are guided by mutual trust and respect, accountability to one another, and a shared sense of mission and purpose.

The DC Reengagement Center acknowledges that the importance of diversity in our work and on our team, strengthens our teamwork and demonstrates how our agency values the richness of diversity and equity among staff and students alike. Our staff aims to continue to support diversity, equity, teamwork and collaboration through every aspect of our work. This is reflective agency-wide and will continue to strengthen not only our work, but the core of our mission and purpose as a leading state education agency moving toward zero disengaged youth.



## DC REC RESPONSE TO COVID

From March of 2020 to present, DC Government transitioned into full Situational Telework due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As an immediate response to this transition, the following initiatives were created to continue to support and meet the needs of clients in a virtual environment:

### THE LEARNING CIRCLE (TLC)

The DC REC established a virtual community for integrated learning and social engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic for DC REC clients. TLC is the glue that links our clients to our virtual engagement offerings; Essential Education, REC Live, C.O.R.E., school placements, and more.

### ONLINE REFERRAL SYSTEM & ZOHIO CHAT FUNCTION

In an effort to simplify the referral process, the DC REC worked with the Chief Information Office to create an electronic referral form system available to anyone desiring to submit a referral. Also, in partnership with CIO, we added an online chat feature to the BackOnTrack (BOT) website that connects website visitors to a live REC staff member.

### DC REC LIVE

To ensure that client engagement continued, the DC REC created a weekly virtual program, *DC REC LIVE*, to communicate with our clients in a safe virtual setting. DC REC LIVE provides clients with the physiological, social justice, socio-economic, and socio-emotional aspects clients traditionally received in the center setting, but now in a virtual space. DC REC LIVE provides a weekly opportunity for client and staff engagement, resource sharing, health and wellness opportunities, and relationship building. The show's theme is "Real-Time, Real People, Real Responses!"



#### 2020 DC REENGAGEMENT CENTER STAFF

**Veronica Simmons**, Director

**Roderic Irby**, Deputy Director

**Dana Simpson**, Specialist-Outreach (Lead)

**Bryan Diaz**, Bilingual Specialist & Social Media (Lead)

**Lafayette Dublin**, Specialist & Social Media

**Greg Palmer**, Specialist (Post-Secondary and Career Path Lead)

**Dietrich Trent**, Specialist-Community Outreach

#### Front Desk & Support Staff

Joseph Reaves | Clinton Murchison (Support) | Marie Ewart (Intern)



**Visit Us:** Monday - Friday | 8:30 am - 5 pm

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