**Embark Transitional Recovery Homes**

**Weber Houses**

**Summary**

Clarity Research Group conducted a focus group to gather feedback on Embarks transitional housing programs and to provide the opportunity for residents to share their experiences and suggestions for improvement. Eleven residents participated with varying amounts of time at the house ranging from 2 days to 15 months. The participants introduced themselves, shared their backgrounds, and discussed various aspects of their stay at the Weber House, including the transition from jail, the resources provided, and their personal experiences.

The summary below offers insight into participants. Most participants expressed overall appreciation for the support, structure, and safety of the program, though they also identified some areas needing improvement. Common concerns included delays in accessing government benefits, transportation challenges, and worries about transitioning into the community. Staff were praised for their support, compassion and helpfulness.

 **Core Themes Identified**

**1. Environmental Stability & Sense of Home**

* Participants appreciated the **architecture**, cleanliness, and aesthetics of the house (e.g., Victorian style, privacy because of the fenced yard, wood floors). Additionally, residents discussed the benefit of having both their own individual space/bedrooms and having a community space where they can hang out, play games, talk with each other and not isolate.
* **Transition from Jail**: Many participants highlighted the importance of having a place to land and regroup after incarceration. Having a **stable, safe, and structured environment** helped participants transition from incarceration to community life.
* Several noted that while it didn’t feel like “home” emotionally, it **facilitated personal growth** and resource access.

*"This time is really good for recuperation... it gives me a chance to look at my family options, my situation financially... it's like meditation, but better."*

*"We even get together and then have our own space... we all get along at the house."*

**2. Access to Resources & Support**

* Participants emphasized the value of **structured support** in accessing resources such as assistance with Medicaid, Social Security, and obtaining IDs. They emphasized the importance of these resources in helping them become independent and navigate their new lives.
* Participants also mentioned how helpful it was to have access to basic necessities such as **clothing**, **groceries**, **phones and transportation.**
* **Support and help** navigating healthcare, ID, job readiness, education and benefits(via staff and peer coaches) was crucial, especially immediately post-release.

*"I can start searching. I can go to school now. That’s my success—going to school for business management."*

*"They guide you also with resources and that’s amazing too."*

**3. Personal Recovery & Growth**

* Many mentioned **self-awareness**, **goal setting**, and **emotional regulation** as major focuses.
* **Daily check-ins** and the IOP (Intensive Outpatient Program) helped track personal progress and promote structure.
* Programs were seen as beneficial for **recuperation** and **addiction recovery**, but participants wanted **more varied class offerings** (e.g., cooking, financial literacy).

*"Nathan helped me a lot with finding groups that would work for me… online capable, 24/7."*

**4. Community, Belonging & Peer Support**

* The participants valued the **peer support and interaction** they received at the house. They mentioned the benefits of living with others who have similar experiences and the sense of community that developed.
* **Activities and Event Planning**: There was a strong interest in organizing activities and events to foster a sense of togetherness and provide opportunities for residents to engage in the community. Suggestions included planning trips to local attractions (Penny Arcade, library, museums), participating in group recreation (Phoenix Multisport, sober leagues), and volunteering (e.g., Marion House).
* While discussing the desire for more activities and events, some residents discussed that staff proposed **a peer-led leadership structures** (e.g., “president,” “secretary”) to facilitate communication and plan additional opportunities for activities.

*"We’re all suffering from trauma, addiction... it’d be cool to do something together, remind each other we’re not alone."*

*"We need to get our heads out of the emotional aspect from coming out of jail... and do something together."*

**5. Challenges and Barriers**

* **Transportation**, **scheduling**, and **limited staffing** cited as constraints.
* Participants expressed concern about **what happens after the program**, especially if no housing or job is secured. Residents discussed the difficulty of finding housing due to their criminal records.
* Some noted that **more clarity is needed** around timelines, expectations, and **competency class testing** (especially for legal transitions).

*"I had to go to jail to get through this program… is there any way this can be available even if you’re not incarcerated?"*

**6. Perceptions of Staff and Program Structure**

* **Staff Support**: Most had **positive feedback about the staff**, noting they are accessible, respectful, and helpful.
* The residents appreciated the **autonomy** they were given to direct their own care and make decisions about their lives and freedom to structure their own recovery with guidance. They also recognized the importance of becoming **independent and self-sufficient**.
* Some felt the program could improve its **transition planning** and **post-discharge support**.

*"They have a great staff."*

*"Sometimes people can’t do it alone… they need someone to go with them."*

*"Nathan helped me a lot with finding groups that would work for me… online capable, 24/7."*

**7. Motivation & Hope for the Future**

* **Goals and Incentives**: The focus group discussed the importance of setting goals and having incentives to achieve them. Several expressed goals of **school, employment, family reunification**, and **sobriety maintenance**.
* **Group incentives**: Group incentives like barbecues, bowling, and rewards for meeting certain milestones were seen as **effective in motivating residents**.
* Participants recognized this program as a **rare second chance**, with an emphasis on **maximizing the opportunity**.

**Next Steps:** The following suggestions are ideas for working on addressing the identified challenges and improving the program for the benefit of the residents.

* Help new residents have a better understanding of the program's goals and how it helps participants achieve their goals.
* Follow through implementing a peer-led group responsible for planning and organizing group activities and events.