

Second Chances: Career Coaching Leads to Fresh Starts in Kentucky



*Senior Career Coach
Olivia Murphy
assisting Donte at
The Spot: Young
Adult Opportunity
Center*

“The reason we do this is to see that progress. It’s amazing to see our participants grow – Olivia Murphy, The Spot Career Coach

When career coach Olivia first began working with her client Jemara, missed texts, calls and appointments were the norm.

“For lack of a better term, she seemingly lacked drive. We’d talk to her, but she’d be blasé and push us away,” said Olivia. On top of navigating her life after reentry and applying for jobs, Jemara also struggled with finding housing.

However, Olivia was determined to support Jemara. Diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD when she was young, Olivia is familiar with the challenges that come with facing adversity—whether it be through medical conditions like hers, or through previous legal system involvement like her program participants.

Olivia focused on supporting Jemara, listening to her challenges empathetically. Olivia’s persistence led to a breakthrough in the form of a few difficult and candid conversations about life and what the future could hold.

“After that, it’s like a switch inside her flipped,” Olivia said. “She was here every day, she got a job with UPS, and I helped her apply to Jefferson Community & Technical College to pursue a nursing career.”

A holistic framework for second chances

Olivia has since been promoted to senior career coach at The Spot: Young Adult Opportunity Center – a partnership between KentuckianaWorks and the Goodwill Industries of Kentucky that operates as a hub for free career and educational resources for young adults in Louisville, Kentucky.

KentuckianaWorks is also a partner of the Compass Rose Collaborative, a partner network funded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Growth Opportunities grant and managed by FHI 360’s National Institute for Work and Learning. Through the Institute, FHI 360 provides partners like The Spot coaching and guidance and facilitates staff participation in professional development activities.



“We strive to give our partners quick and accurate guidance along with individualized coaching to strengthen their programs,” says Adrienne Eagan, an FHI 360 technical advisor and project manager for the Compass Rose Collaborative. “This in turn maximizes the service we are providing to our program participants.”

Like the other partner organizations in the Compass Rose Collaborative, The Spot operates within a holistic framework, tailoring services to their participants’ needs. At The Spot, the first step is to identify participants’ personal challenges, such as homelessness, unemployment, or previous legal system involvement, in order to find ways to best address them.

Once they address these barriers, the participants are taught soft skills such as team building, conflict resolution, and self-presentation. It is only when they’ve gained proficiency in these essential, personal skills that they get on the route towards career exploration and training – often involving resume writing, mock interviews, work experience, skills training, education, and even internships.

Employment pathways through internships

In addition to providing personal development and career training, The Spot offers its participants internships through the Growth Opportunities grant. The internships allow participants who have been involved with the legal system to showcase their skills, professionalism, and diligence to employers before a background check could discourage them from pursuing opportunities.

The Spot’s close relationship with many Louisville employers has led to a lot of trust that their interns are reliable. “They would hire them because they knew they could rely on them,” Olivia said. Most participants, Olivia reported, remained with those employers even after completing their program.

Granting participants 200 hours of work experience and \$15-an-hour wages is a central element of their Growth Opportunities grant programs.

“They have that income immediately. That’s incredible. Not a lot of places in this area are paying you \$15 an hour starting out. Pairing that with 200 hours to prove yourself as a consistent worker is huge,” said Olivia.

Sustainable and effective

Job fairs, career coaching, cash incentives, paid internships, work training, and more have built The Spot’s reputation as a go-to resource for young adults in Louisville looking to find employment.

“A lot of our enrollments come from word of mouth. It’s a great opportunity. While some only start out to earn money, they end up with much more than that.”

“We strive to give our partners quick and accurate guidance along with individualized coaching to strengthen their programs.” – Adrienne Eagan, CRC Project Manager

Olivia explained that participants often overcome challenges such as homelessness and mental health – and make the most of their second chance. From there, most participants gain more than a job that just pays the bills. They earn full-time employment — the first step to a successful career and becoming a thriving member of their community.

Today, Jemara is proof of that. She has her own apartment, remains employed with UPS, and has been getting great grades as she pursues a nursing degree. “The reason we do this is to see that progress. It’s been amazing to watch her grow,” Olivia said.

For more information about The Spot, please visit <https://www.thespotky.org>. To learn more about the Compass Rose Collaborative, please read our [fact sheet](#).

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About FHI 360: FHI 360 is a global organization that mobilizes research, resources and relationships so people everywhere have access to the opportunities they need to lead full and healthy lives. With collaborations in over 60 countries, we work directly with local leaders to advance social and economic equity, improve health and well-being, respond to humanitarian crises and strengthen community resilience. We share data-driven insights and scalable tools that expand access and equity so communities can effectively address complex challenges, respond to shocks and achieve thriving futures.

Washington DC Office

1825 Connecticut Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20009 USA
T 1.202.884.8000
F 1.202.884.8400

FHI 360 Headquarters

359 Blackwell Street, Suite 200
Durham, NC 27701 USA
T 1.919.544.7040
F 1.919.544.7261

www.fhi360.org