

# ***Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force***

## ***Justice and Legal System Ad Hoc Committee***

### ***Statement of Work***

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#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force is “to continually review Whatcom County’s criminal justice and behavioral health programs and make specific recommendations to safely and effectively reduce incarceration of individuals struggling with mental illness and chemical dependency, and minimize jail utilization by pretrial defendants who can safely be released.” (Ord. 2015-037; Ord. 2015-025; County Code 2.46.020).

The purpose of the Justice and Legal System Ad Hoc Committee is to recommend to the Task Force specific, achievable programs and services that would prevent or reduce incarceration, if implemented within the legal and law enforcement systems. Treatment for addiction and mental health, and other behavioral health programs and services are the purview of a different Ad Hoc Committee.

Recommendations will be based on local needs, recognized best practices, and the work of the other two Ad Hoc Committees.

#### **Goals**

- Evaluate the alternatives to incarceration which currently exist in Whatcom County, comparing those alternatives to recognized best practices and recommending improvements as appropriate
- Identify new or underutilized programs and services that are effective alternatives to incarceration, recommending implementation or expansion as appropriate
- Identify and recommend alternatives to jail that will promote a pretrial defendant’s responsibility to appear in court and will not jeopardize community safety
- Identify and recommend measures the courts and law enforcement should implement to reduce incarceration of all defendants, consistent with the requirements of our state’s laws
- Recommend a process which will enable law enforcement and the courts, working with community health resources, to identify those defendants who would benefit from treatment for mental illness or drug/alcohol dependency
- Recommend discharge planning procedures which will help people who are leaving incarceration connect with and engage in community and behavioral health services available in the community

#### **Scope (Project Tasks)**

- Assemble information about programs and services currently in existence (including services offered; financial resources; budgets and expenses; numbers of people served, with demographics; and other pertinent information).
  - Assess the effectiveness of these programs and services in reducing incarceration while protecting community safety and causing defendants to appear in court as required
  - Using the Sequential Intercept Model and other tools, identify gaps in existing programs and services
  - Recommend improvements and how they could be implemented.

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#### **Scope (Project Tasks) (cont'd)**

- Consider measures which would connect people in crisis to appropriate behavioral health services before any criminal conduct has occurred.
- Identify recognized best practices known to reduce incarceration without compromise to the goals of our state's criminal law and procedure
  - For pretrial defendants: incarceration only as necessary to assure community safety and the defendant's appearance for hearings and trial
  - For convicted defendants: incarceration alternatives which are consistent with the law's goals of punishment, deterrence and rehabilitation
- Recommend additional or modified programs and services and describe how they could be implemented

#### **Deliverables**

- Progress report for Phase One deliverable date
- Recommendations for improvements to existing programs and services
- Recommendations for additional or modified programs and services

#### **Schedule of Work**

- Workgroup meeting schedule
  - December 7, 2015
  - January 04, 2016
  - January 25, 2016
  - February 8, 2016
  - March 28, 2016
  - April 11, 2016
  - May 16, 2016
  - June 13, 2016
  - July 18, 2016
  - August 8, 2016
  - September 19, 2016
  - October 10, 2016
- Sequential Intercept Model<sup>1</sup> mapping (ongoing)
- Benchmarking<sup>2</sup> (ongoing)
- Recommendations to the Task Force regarding available alternatives to incarceration

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<sup>1</sup> Munetz, M.R. & Griffin, P.A. (2006, April 1). Use of the Sequential Intercept Model as an approach to decriminalization of people with serious mental illness. *Psychiatric Services*, 57(4), 544-549, <http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/ps.2006.57.4.544>

<sup>2</sup> A benchmark is "something that serves as a standard by which others may be measured or judged." "Benchmark." Merriam-Webster.com. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 3 June 2016.

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#### **Measures of Success**

Timely delivery of clear and specific recommendations for programs and services that:

- can be implemented in Whatcom County;
- will be effective in reducing incarceration of pretrial and convicted defendants;
- are consistent with the law's goals for pretrial release and post-conviction sentencing.

#### **Identified Best Practices**

Incorporate for our work appropriate best practices that meet nationally recognized standards for effectiveness and achievability. Institutions that promote best practices include the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) and its Gains Center; the Vera Institute of Justice; the National Association of Counties; and the Council of State Governments Justice Center.

#### **Other Ad Hoc Committees**

The purpose of the Triage Facility and Facility Programming Ad Hoc Committee is to make recommendations to Task Force regarding the construction and operation of a new or expanded multi-purpose crisis triage facility to assist with jail and hospital diversion of individuals struggling with mental illness and/or chemical dependency.

The purpose of the Behavioral Health Ad Hoc Committee is to make recommendations to the Task Force regarding behavioral health programs and services that will have the potential to prevent or reduce incarceration. Current, enhanced and new programs and services are under consideration.

The work of the Ad Hoc Committees is interrelated and interdependent.