

***Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
Behavioral Health and Legal & Justice Systems Subcommittees
Joint Meeting Summary for May 14, 2019***

1. Call to Order

Legal & Justice Systems Subcommittee Chair Stephen Gockley called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m. in the Whatcom County Courthouse Conference Room 514, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham.

Legal & Justice Systems Committee

Members Present: Angela Anderson, Bill Elfo, Arlene Feld, Heather Flaherty, Stephen Gockley, Raylene King, Darlene Peterson, Dave Graham, Peter Ruffatto

Also Present: Fred Heydrich (proxy for Deborra Garrett) and Kristin Hanna (proxy for Deborah Hawley)

Members Absent: Deborra Garrett, Deborah Hawley, Moonwater, Eric Peterson

Behavioral Health Committee

Members Present: Dan Hammill, Ryan King, Mike Parker, Megan Ballew

Members Absent: Byron Manering, Kelli Linville, Doug Chadwick

Election of Committee Chairs: Legal & Justice Systems Subcommittee

Gockley moved to appoint Arlene Feld and Raylene King as committee co-chairs, effective July 1. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously (Elfo and Hanna out of the room.)

Election of Committee Chairs: Behavioral Health Subcommittee

Hammill moved to appoint Dan Hammill and Mike Parker as committee co-chairs. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

2. Review of draft committee sections of Task Force Annual Report

Gockley referenced the draft report for the Legal & Justice Systems Subcommittee, and stated that committee members can submit proposed changes and corrections to him and Mark Gardner.

3. Presentation by Dan Hammill and Barry Buchanan on Policy Academy Resolution Reducing Incarceration of Young Adults

Hammill stated the City of Bellingham behavioral health police officer will soon be online. He reported on the Intergovernmental Policy Academy proposed resolution reducing incarceration of young adults.

- The work plan is for the joint City and County resolution, which should also include school districts.

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- The goal is to follow the neurological evidence showing the benefit of reducing incarceration of young people, who are not yet fully adult.
- Consider the social determinants of health that cause young adults to show up at the front door of the criminal justice system versus the first day of college.
- They are trying to find sustainable operational funding for the crisis stabilization facility.
- A priority is to track data to evaluate success, challenges, and further needs.
- The final components of the plan will be presented in Philadelphia in June to the National League of Cities, the National Association of Counties, the National Council on State Legislatures, among other stakeholders.

Committee members discussed next steps to support the resolution and the entire effort, including focusing on the social determinants of health that create risk for incarceration.

Peterson moved that the Legal and Justice Systems Committee support the resolution as written. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously (Elfo out of the room).

There was a motion that the Behavioral Health Committee support the resolution as written. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

4. Update on the Ground-level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) program

Deacon reported on the program:

- They have awarded the contract for hub services to SeaMar, which includes a program manager, three mental health case managers, one community health worker, and an administrative assistant. They are also hiring an advanced registered nurse practitioner.
- They are up to 60 or 65 members now. The total capacity is 80.
- A screening matrix considers the busiest people, based on arrest records, 9-1-1 calls and responses, and other factors. They do not prohibit any criminal background.
- Moving forward, they will include the nurse practitioner who can dispense medication in the field and connect people to ongoing services.
- They are already experiencing benefits, such as reductions in arrests and emergency calls and visits and sustained housing.
- They must engage people enough to allow them to share information with law enforcement to develop a community support plan for first responders.

Committee members discussed how long someone participates in GRACE, which is based on how long a person can go without any emergency calls; whether a graduated participant is allowed to return to the program if needed; how GRACE is a diversion from jail; working with prosecutors on the possibility of a new Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program functioning under the GRACE program; referrals to the program from the hospital, law enforcement, jails, and community paramedics; and creating and building the systems that will promote financial stability.

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5. Update on fast-track case processing versus Drug Court

Gockley described the differences between the Fast Track and Drug Court programs.

Committee members discussed the background and benefits of the Fast Track program; whether Fast Track diverts people from drug court; how people will not succeed in Drug Court unless they truly want to get treatment; pre-approving people for drug court to make sure it's readily available, in case they decide to participate; an inherent conflict between the two programs that can't be resolved if someone doesn't want treatment; whether a new pretrial services program will allow people to make better decisions and choose drug court instead of Fast Track; whether they can track the recidivism of someone who has accepted Fast Track; the best goal for rehabilitating people from reentering the system; identifying barriers that impact a person's decision to enter treatment; in-patient treatment as an alternative to jail; medical assisted treatment (MAT) in jail; getting the Information Needs and Data Exchange (INDEX) to collect data on the MAT program to evaluate its impacts; new case management software at the Public Defender's Office; the need for housing; and tracking the cost of housing someone versus leaving them unhoused.

To help clients who are not ready for the drug court program:

- The need for day-for-day credit at an in-patient facility, especially when that could be extended beyond 30 days.
- Adequate availability of in-custody evaluations
- Eliminate the wait list for bed days
- The need for a local in-patient facility or, at the very least, accompanying an inmate to the bus station to catch a bus to a remote facility to make sure they get there. More service capacity for treatment.
- The need for easy entry into the drug treatment process once someone makes the decision to get treatment.

6. Discussion of the status of in-custody evaluations

Committee members discussed running out of the number of available in-custody evaluations; a certain number of evaluations that are allowed per month; how to prioritize who gets evaluations; how to contract for an unlimited number of evaluations; and workforce shortage in the chemical dependency field.

Deacon stated she will work with the provider, the Public Defender, and Prosecutor on the need and report back to the Legal and Justice Systems Committee.

7. Discussion of Prosecutor's Office referrals to specialty courts

Dave Graham, Prosecutor's Office, stated mental health court staff indicate things are going very well. Most participants have co-occurring challenges with substance use, which can be a challenge.

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Linda Grant, Mental Health Court Program Manager, stated mental health court is a misdemeanor court, but they are working with individuals whose charges are dropped down from felony charge, so weighing the violence risk to the community is an issue. Mental Health court is really a co-occurring court, since 98 percent also have a substance use disorder. People who participate are really ready to make changes in their life.

Committee members and presenters discussed referrals to the City's mental health court; the number of clients who've participated; and the same challenges and needs as drug court, including the need for in-patient treatment and supported housing; and referrals for domestic violence offender treatment.

8. Discussion of jail transition and re-entry

This item was not discussed.

9. Discussion of training needs across law enforcement, jail, legal and judicial systems, such as trauma-informed care

Deacon stated the behavioral health fund includes dollars for behavioral health training for law enforcement, housing case managers, and others. Training on trauma-informed care is allowed.

10. Introduction to Custom Task Force Sequential Intercept Inventory

Jill Nixon, County Council Legislative Coordinator, reported on the Steering Committee's concept of creating a custom sequential intercept inventory and map for the Task Force.

Committee members discussed organizing the Task Force's efforts; incorporating more prevention efforts into the process; and next steps in completing the inventory.

11. Public Comment

Joy Gilfilen, Restorative Community Coalition, spoke about the gap between the public and the inmates, potential solutions, and the work of her coalition.

12. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 p.m.