

***Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force***  
***Legal & Justice Systems Subcommittee***  
**Meeting Summary for September 10, 2019**

---

**1. Call To Order**

Committee Co-Chair Raylene King called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m. in the Whatcom County Courthouse Conference Room 514, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham.

Members Present: Bill Elfo, Arlene Feld, Heather Flaherty, Stephen Gockley, Raylene King, Moonwater, Darlene Peterson, Eric Richey, Peter Ruffatto

Also Present: Sheriff Deputy Jamie Collins, Bellingham Police Officer Zach Serad, Blaine Police Officer Keith Olson

Members Absent: Angela Anderson, Deborra Garrett, Deborah Hawley, Eric Peterson

**2. Discussion with behavioral health-specialized law enforcement officers in the county**

Serad described the behavioral health officer program for the City of Bellingham. The program is new, and the goals are to reduce the number of 911 calls to which officers have to respond; to be a point of communication for community stakeholders, and; to get folks into the care they need. He monitors a caseload of about 30 people. He works closely with the Ground-level Response And Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) program.

Olson stated the Blaine program is brand new. They're still developing program, but their goals are the same as Bellingham.

Collins described the Sheriff's Office program, which will soon deploy a second behavioral health officer. He focuses on mental health calls. His role is to identify whether there are mental health issues impacting a situation and help citizens access available resources.

Committee members and presenters discussed:

- Caseload limits and caps
- Training
- Gaps in the system, including: housing, mental health facilities, communications among agencies, the need to restart the Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) with designated crisis responders (DCRs)
- Facilities that are often full and can't be accessed, including detox and the Specialized Emergency Care Unit (SECU) at St. Joseph Hospital
- The need for more housing like 22 North and Francis Place
- Using data to identify gaps, trends such as the escalating number of calls, and statistics on the hospital and triage facility not accepting people due to capacity issues
- Coordination between the behavioral health officers and probation officers
- Developing relationships in the community to create more treatment and support pathways, including temporary nursing home stay for the elderly and strengthening

***Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force***  
***Legal & Justice Systems Subcommittee***  
**Meeting Summary for September 10, 2019**

---

family resources and relationships through Dispute Resolution Center, Brigid Collins, and other services

- The need for urgent mental health care and separate spaces for children and the elderly
- Developing a care plan for families
- Flagging certain people through the 911 system who have case managers
- The possibility of working with Northwest Youth Services
- The Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) team program, which is the Lake Whatcom Treatment Center intensive case management for mental health services, taking on their clients with insurance
- Identifying what type of housing is needed most
- Working with autistic individuals
- The Children's Long-term Inpatient Program (CLIP)

When asked how the committee can help the behavioral health officers:

- More space to take someone with who needs an evaluation: SECU and detox are often full
- Reinstate the Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT)
- Develop more supported housing like 22 North and Francis Place
- More education for parents and people regarding the steps and services they need to access to stabilize behavioral health issues
- A communication system where all the officers can coordinate information on people they may come in contact with

**3. Caseloads**

This item was not discussed.

**4. Next Steps: Ideas & Further Information**

The committee members discussed:

- Reentry: have a discussion with David Goldman
- Reentry: how to connect people to services when they are released from incarceration in locations other than the County jail
- Reentry: discuss at a joint meeting with the Behavioral Health Committee
- Reentry: have a discussion with representatives from Goodwill
- The committee's role in 1. connecting people who can share information and affect change independent of the committee, and 2. working more directly on program

**5. Other Business**

Ruffatto described the City Council resolution regarding House Bill (HB) 1406, a sales tax rebate from the State.

***Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force***  
***Legal & Justice Systems Subcommittee***  
**Meeting Summary for September 10, 2019**

---

**6. Public Comment**

There was no public comment

**7. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.