

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
Legal & Justice Systems Subcommittee
Draft Meeting Summary for October 8, 2019

1. Call To Order

Committee Co-Chair Arlene Feld / Raylene King called the meeting to order at 11:36 a.m. in the Whatcom County Courthouse Conference Room 514, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham.

Members Present: Angela Anderson, Bill Elfo, Arlene Feld, Stephen Gockley, Deborah Hawley, Raylene King, Moonwater, Darlene Peterson

Members Absent: Heather Flaherty, Deborra Garrett, Eric Peterson

2. Jail Reentry: Presentations from David Goldman, jail educator, and Benita Bowen, Goodwill Industries

Goldman spoke about his background as a GED educator in the Whatcom County jail and with helping inmates feel empowered and to identify, reduce, and eliminate barriers to being successful by providing an authentic education. Students and other inmates were polled about various issues so they could have a voice in the criminal justice system. He spends 12 hours a week directly teaching students

The committee discussed criteria for being allowed into the program, the limited amount available teaching space, and the high number of inmates who are interested in some kind of learning or treatment program while incarcerated. Language barriers haven't really been a problem. The student population is transient, so he needs to adjust his curriculum accordingly. Needs include:

- A proper learning space in the jail
- The need to classify people who can participate in learning programs
- According to inmates, who picks them up from jail is key to whether or not they will return to jail
- More people like Alyson Batchelder-Bestle to provide wraparound services to the inmates
- An employee to serve as a navigation coordinator for volunteers and service organizations

Bowen described her background and the origin of the Goodwill Industries reentry employment services that she provides. The inmates need tangible information, not lectures and talk, and they need to feel empowered with skills. She gave a presentation on what she teaches her students, including how to be hopeful, how to dress appropriately for a job interview and work, and how to create a resume. She also helps people make connections to housing and transportation.

Goodwill Industries program offerings include classes with learning labs, a job opening lab, prescription eyewear, legal help, funding for car insurance, transportation, and other emergencies. Priority needs include:

- Jail inmates need to learn about digital education and applying for jobs online
- Bring in the Job Corps for younger inmates

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Cammie Carl, Seattle Goodwill, spoke about her background as an educator in several jails in King County and the Kent Regional Justice Center, the difficulty of finding work with a conviction record, and networking with nonprofit organizations that work with people who are or have been incarcerated. Her classes include trauma care and peer support, life skills, legal, and other support services. Many college campuses have reentry navigators for students who have been incarcerated.

The committee discussed:

- WorkSource Fresh Start program (Karen)
- Community Partnership for Transition Services (CPTS)
- School release programs
- Getting Lummi inmates access to the Lummi Nation wraparound services
- The importance of navigational support
- The need for data on programs that successfully impact recidivism
- How to influence change: data plus impactful personal stories
- How to help people on probation not lose employment when they have to go to court
- Creating a Goodwill Industries presence in the smaller communities
- Probation conditions

3. Update on improvements to case processing

Anderson reported on several improvements:

- The Prosecutor's Office and Public Defender's Office are both getting new case management software
- They've worked with the courts to improve the court calendar system, including lengthening the time between status and trial
- Better confirmation of case trial
- The Superior Court pretrial unit is operational, although they have not yet implemented a risk assessment tool.

Heavy turnover recently in the Prosecutor's Office and Public Defender's Office has had impacts. As more people are being released, it will take longer to resolve cases.

4. November Joint meeting with Behavioral Health Committee: Agenda items to discuss

The committee concurred to add the Sheriff's Office to the presentation about recent crime trends and to get specific data from Bellingham Police Department and the Sheriff's Office on those trends.

5. Other Business

King submitted and reported on the draft Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force Sequential Intercept Service Inventory.

Moonwater reported on a recent event regarding learning services and application of restorative justice principles in conjunction with Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS).

6. Public Comment

Irene Morgan spoke about restorative justice, the need for court navigators, probation officers being more supportive, employers who take advantage of employees with records, the need for digital training, and adding more to the sequential intercept model.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:29 p.m.

DRAFT