

***Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
Behavioral Health and Legal & Justice Systems Subcommittees
Joint Meeting Summary for November 12, 2019***

1. Call to Order

Legal & Justice Systems Subcommittee Co-Chair Raylene King 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: Arlene Feld, Heather Flaherty, Stephen Gockley, Deborah Hawley, Raylene King, Moonwater, Darlene Peterson, Peter Ruffatto

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

Members Absent: Bill Elfo, Deborra Garrett, Eric Peterson, Maia Vanyo

Behavioral Health Committee

Members Present: Megan Ballew, Doug Chadwick, Dan Hammill, Ryan King, Byron Manering, Mike Parker

Members Absent: Kelli Linville

2. Update from each committee on their recent work

Parker and Hammill reported for the Behavioral Health Committee on recent presentations:

- Colorado's Handle with Care Program for students who have experienced trauma
- Bellingham Public School District's behavioral health programs
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS) programs

Feld and Lewis reported for the Legal & Justice Systems Committee on recent presentations:

- Jail educator David Goldman on learning programs in the jail
- Law enforcement officers from the County, Bellingham, and Blaine who specialize in behavioral health response
- Goodwill Industries representatives spoke about their reentry services

Hammill stated the Behavioral Health Committee is trying to work upstream as much as possible.

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- 3. Update from Bellingham Police Department and Whatcom County Sheriff's Office on behavioral health crime trends in Bellingham and Whatcom County**
- AND -
- 4. Discussion of reentry services**
- AND -
- 5. Discussion of behavioral health specialized law enforcement, non-law enforcement mobile crisis response teams, and juvenile and elderly crisis response**

The following presenters spoke about their work in law enforcement with individuals having a behavioral health crisis and answered questions:

- Laura Woods, Ground-level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) Program Mental Health Liaison with Bellingham Police Department
- Officer Zach Serad, Bellingham Police,
- Deputy Jamie Collins, Sheriff's Office

Woods described the GRACE Program and Bellingham Police Department program, their caseloads, when clients graduate from the GRACE program, and how they help their clients. The biggest challenges include navigating the systems, including the housing and healthcare systems. Another struggle is the lack of services. It may take months to get an appointment or medication. Housing waits can be up to a year. There need to be more services for drug and alcohol in-patient and out-patient treatment.

The committee members and presenters discussed the need for more care navigators, the Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP) on the GRACE team, how to work with clients who are actively acting out at a treatment center, and people coming out of jail who are considered clean and sober and not eligible for in-patient treatment. Patrol is deciding whether or not to arrest individuals who are in the GRACE program, if possible. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. The LEAD program will face challenges because services in the community aren't available. The committee discussed the problems with recruiting mental health providers to this area, the lack of housing options, the impact of methamphetamine abuse, and the need for a dedicated funding source for housing that doesn't have eligibility requirements.

Chadwick reported on crime trends. If mental health is an issue, officers will try to divert people from the jail. There is a 20 percent increase in the number of people booked into the jail who are referred for mental health evaluation, and a 12 percent increase in those who need mental health services.

The committee discussed whether it's possible to treat someone involuntarily for substance use disorder, whether the increasing population may be due to better reporting and tracking, the increase in depression and anxiety in young people, and helping families deal with family members who are in crisis.

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Collins reported on the Sheriff's Office behavioral health law enforcement response program, including working with the GRACE team, and caseloads. The committee discussed collaborating with the public defense counsel; officer training; history of trauma in most people who are addicted; school district programs; the need for skills education; improving efficiencies, communication, and access to services; allowing nonprofit agencies to provide their services in jail; and the need for housing, transportation, and jobs upon release from incarceration.

The committee discussed elder care of folks who are deteriorating mentally due to dementia and Alzheimer's and where kids are going when they're having mental health issues.

6. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.