

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
Behavioral Health Subcommittee
DRAFT Meeting Summary for July 13, 2020

1. Call To Order

Committee Co-Chair Dan Hammill called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m. The meeting was a virtual remote-only meeting.

Members Present: Megan Ballew, Nathan Bajema, Doug Chadwick, Arlene Feld, Heather Flaherty, Stephen Gockley, Dan Hammill, Mike Hilley, Perry Mowery, Mike Parker

Members Absent: Seth Fleetwood, Byron Manering

2. Options for expanding existing programs such as the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT), and other community programs that are outreach- or clinic-based.

Parker updated the committee on the Homeless Outreach Team:

- Funded largely by City of Bellingham, but also work in the county
- Have five staff members, including an opioid substance use disorder specialist
- The program is scalable and could be increased based on hours and days of the week
- There is an opportunity to provide more services in the county

He will provide a more in-depth report to the full Task Force, including current cost and scalability.

The committee discussed HOT:

- The Sheriff's Office would be interested in working to expand the program in the county
- The HOT members had over 5,000 interactions during the most recent year for which they have statistics
- How the HOT members work with individuals in the short- and long-term
- Activities include, but aren't limited to, targeted camp outreach and other focused outreach in downtown Bellingham, visiting meal programs, and going with a client to an appointment.
- During the coronavirus pandemic, services have included delivering food and other services to those who can't make it to the food bank.
- Statistics and reporting data
- Diverting individuals who are overdosing to the new crisis stabilization center when it opens; strengthening the team that works at the center
- The trends in substance use overdose and domestic violence during the pandemic

The committee discussed the PACT team services, which are similar to the Ground-level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) team services, including housing.

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Anne Deacon, Health Department, described the PACT program, which is considered outpatient hospitalization for people with severe persistent mental illness. PACT program participants can also be involved with the mental health court or GRACE Program. Some have no contact with law enforcement or emergency medical services (EMS). There are approximately 80 individuals involved in the program, provided by one treatment provider. A second provider has applied to expand those services.

Hammill reported on a Eugene, Oregon program that diverts 9-1-1 calls to social workers and nurses when appropriate as part of a program called Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS). These types of diversion programs save communities' money and help people get their lives in better order.

The committee discussed crisis response services versus services for enrolled participants such as GRACE and the possibility of expanding the mobile crisis outreach team (MCOT), which works with law enforcement.

3. Future options for using the Crisis Stabilization Facility

Deacon reported on the status of the new facility. They hope to open in October and are working with the providers on the program models. By opening, they won't have the ability for law enforcement to divert and hold someone involuntarily at the facility for up to 12 hours. There is disagreement about the level of staffing to provide that service. An advisory committee that includes law enforcement is setting up protocols that will allow diversion to the facility. They will have 24/7 nursing services with prescribing ability. They are working to divert from the emergency department at the hospital.

The committee discussed who decides on the service levels provided for involuntary commitment and appropriate staffing levels.

4. Discussion of Ground-level Response And Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) Programs

Deacon reported on the GRACE program.

- They are beginning to incorporate LEAD under the GRACE umbrella
- They have hired the LEAD program supervisor, and are working on hiring others
- Much work is being done on program development and sustainability, funding, and protocols with law enforcement and the Prosecutor
- GRACE staff has been diverted to coronavirus isolation and quarantine facility

Hilley continued to report on options for funding and the possibility of expanding in light of upcoming budget cutbacks. Teams are looking at what the services will look like in the future. There is a need for increased use of community paramedics. He would like to expand that team by having an officer, paramedic, and social worker work together 12 hours per day to handle mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) calls.

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The committee discussed an upcoming meeting topic to address looking at programs through the lens of racial equity.

5. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

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