

Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force / Law & Justice Council
DRAFT Meeting Summary August 3, 2020

1. Call to Order

Task Force Co-Chairs Jack Hovenier called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: Barry Buchanan, Anne Deacon, David Doll, Bill Elfo, Arlene Feld, Heather Flaherty, Seth Fleetwood, Stephen Gockley, Daniel Hammill, Deborah Hawley, Mike Hilley, Jack Hovenier, Raylene King, Scott Korthuis, Byron Manering, Moonwater, Eric Petersen, Dave Reynolds, Eric Richey, Tyler Schroeder, Maia Vanyo, Greg Winter

Absent: Travis Brockie, Deborra Garrett, Darlene Peterson, Kevin Turner, Bruce Van Glubt

2. Report on Listening Series on Race & Justice

County Executive Satpal Sidhu and Bellingham Mayor Seth Fleetwood updated the Task Force on the Race & Justice Listening Series.

4. Jail Updates

Elfo updated the Task Force on jail information:

- Cell door repairs are complete
- There are concerns about inmate exposure to the Covid virus. Jail medical staff instituted screening protocols, including masks, suspended work crew, book restrictions, and other measures
- Reduced jail population and reliance on other jails. Only using the County's jail.
- Described booking restrictions and recent population
- Courts are more frequently releasing people on their own personal recognizance
- Statistics show 80 percent of defendants in District Court and 50 percent in Superior Court are missing court dates
- There is a significant backlog in the court system

Elfo continued to report that he is proud of the efforts of local law enforcement, there is extensive screening of people not suited for law enforcement work and extensive training; policies are continually reviewed for standards and best practices; they are working to get policies online; Washington State law enforcement training is a national model for training in the country; the use of mental health officers and training far exceeds State standards; and, there is always joint deployment of SWAT and crisis response deputies. He described a recent example of deputies providing medical support to person who was shooting at them. He receives much positive feedback about deputies from the community.

3. Committee Updates

Crisis Stabilization Facility Committee

Deacon reported on the new Crisis Stabilization Center:

- Open in the fall
- An advisory committee is formed
- The goal is to maximize drop-offs at the Center instead of the hospital emergency department or jail
- They are working with the managed care organizations (MCOs) on operational funding
- Crisis Stabilization Center will be the hub for the behavioral health crisis system in the county
- The status of operational funding in the future and negotiations between the MCOs and treatment providers

Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force / Law & Justice Council
DRAFT Meeting Summary August 3, 2020

Behavioral Health Committee

Mike Parker, Committee Co-Chair, reported on the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), including:

- HOT food distribution program
- Housing
- Scalability of street outreach into the county

Deacon reported Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT).

Hamill reported that the committee discussed the Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) program, a 9-1-1 diversion program from Eugene, Oregon.

Deacon reported on the Ground-level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) Program. Expandability would require more intensive case managers, not 24/7 crisis response.

Parker reported on committee discussions about:

- Higher rates of overdosing during Covid due to separation and isolation.
- Interest in interventions through intercept 0 and connection to services
- Racial equity lens toolkit

Legal and Justice Systems Committee

Feld reported for the committee:

- Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program is fully grant funded
- They will be talking about 24/7 direct diversions
- The court shutdown for many cases due to Covid
- They are not incarcerating many crimes, except for assaults and domestic violence
- Pretrial services are remote-only
- Encouraging increased funding from the MCOs
- Expanded services will help more people

King reported on the status of the courts in the small cities and the limited bookings by the City of Bellingham. Future committee meetings will include:

- Racial equity
- Reentry programs and staffing

The Task Force members discussed challenges with court dates,

Steering Committee

Buchanan reported the committee and read from the June and July meeting summaries.

Pretrial Processes Workgroup

Gockley reported workgroup. Status of risk assessment is halted due to Covid and a change in focus. There has been a significant increase in pretrial releases. They continue to work with Dr. Andrew Peterson on statistics. Judge Garrett is retiring at the end of the calendar year.

The Task Force members discussed the significant uptick in new felony crimes from those who have been released from custody and the need to track this specific data.

Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force / Law & Justice Council
DRAFT Meeting Summary August 3, 2020

5. Prosecutor's Office Updates

Richey reported:

- Racial equality listening sessions he's conducted since the death of George Floyd. One new idea is to create a racial equity commission
- In the Prosecutor's Office, there is a backlog of cases, but there is no incentive to resolve them, since there are no court hearings
- He's been asked for a 10 percent budget reduction in the upcoming biennium
- He's making changes that will include:
 - No driving while license suspended (DWLS 3rd) cases, and he is dismissing all new cases
 - Reduced caseloads due to stipulated orders of continuance: dismissed after 12 months of good behavior, beginning January 1
 - direct filing simple cases of drug charges into District Court

Vanessa Martin, Prosecutor's Office reported on LEAD. The program is fully funded for 3 years. She described developing the program components. They have more than 50 referrals from law enforcement, which will convert to onsite diversion. They are hiring five case managers, including a staff person for outreach. The program will launch in September.

The Task Force members discussed similarities and differences with the GRACE program, which include wraparound services and the LEAD folks who are all involved in the criminal justice system. The Task Force members also discussed the need to communicate the work of the Task Force to the general public.

6. Ground-level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) Program Update

Deacon reported on the GRACE Program:

- They are working with prosecutor's office
- Eighty people are enrolled
- Staff have been diverted to oversight of the quarantine facility for the Covid pandemic response

In addition to the GRACE program, the jail reentry position is funded for 2021. The MCOs contract with the Health Care Authority requires that reentry services are provided to enrolled members, so they may fund a .5 FTE.

The Task Force members discussed the MCOs attending North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization (NSBHASO) monthly meetings and the need for reentry services for more than those with behavioral health challenges.

7. Other Business

The Task Force members discussed the status of a new prosecutor caseload software system. They are putting together a contract.

8. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:43 a.m.