

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
Behavioral Health Subcommittee
Meeting Summary for March 16, 2021

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1. Call to Order

Committee Co-Chair Mike Parker called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. The meeting was held via remote-only Zoom Webinar.

Members Present: Megan Ballew, Chris Cochran, Arlene Feld, Heather Flaherty, Stephen Gockley, Dan Hammill, Mike Hilley, Byron Manering, Perry Mowery, Mike Parker, Donnell Tanksley, Brien Thane

Members Absent: Nathan Bajema, Doug Chadwick, Seth Fleetwood, Britta Johnson

2. [Potential Treatment Option for Pregnant and Parenting Woman \(00:01:44\)](#)

Manering reported on the Pregnant and Parenting Women Program:

- Availability of in-patient behavioral health treatment facility for women with children has been missing
- There is a need for at least 20 beds within Whatcom County
- At a recent meeting with Linda Grant, they discussed the possibility of expanding treatment and other alternative programs
- Rising Strong Program in Eastern Washington is an innovative approach to bring together multiple existing resources
- He is meeting with the director of the Rising Start Program soon

The committee members discussed including someone with clinical experience in the meeting with the program directors, whether they can incorporate a program for pregnant and parenting women in an already-existing program, the possibility of using housing vouchers and existing housing stock, partnering with Lummi Nation to support tribal members, total need countywide, the needs for supports and case management around such a program, contributions from the Empire Health Foundation in developing the Rising Start Program, and the need for a clinical workforce.

3. [GARE Toolkit \(00:23:10\)](#)

Parker reported on a Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) information session webinar with the membership director of GARE, which included a discussion of how people use the toolkit and how people make a commitment to use GARE.

Flaherty reported on her work to develop a Racial Equity Commission to address racial disparity and racial equity in Whatcom County. There is an open request for proposals (RFP) process to continue developing the commission. They hope to have an ordinance in place by the end of the year.

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Parker continued to report on implementing GARE within the committee and to have representation across departments. Make a request of INDEX Committee on data to track information and determine outcomes. The data information may not be uniform across all systems.

The committee discussed:

- How to operationalize racial equity within this committee
- Look at the makeup of the Behavioral Health Committee and determine where they might be missing representation
- Get a handle on the social determinants of health that lead to future criminogenic outcomes
- Gather diversity data in the behavioral health provider workforce
- They need to address disparities in where they divert people to
- Review booking data by jurisdiction
- Determine who is being offered services and what are the outcomes, based on race
- Don't be afraid to ask for that racial and ethnic data
- Observe the outcomes of the Ground-level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE), Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), and the Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT)

4. [2021 Committee priorities \(00:47:49\)](#)

Hammill reported on the recent Supreme Court Blake decision regarding the State statute on criminal possession of a controlled substance and the need for behavioral health services in the community as a result of the decision.

Committee discussed additional priorities:

- Substance use disorder, figuring out treatment options for methamphetamine use
- Upstream prevention, such as a children's initiative
- House Bill 1590, House Bill 1406, Economic Impact Development (EDI) funds, the real estate excise tax (REET) fund, review how funds are being spent from the one-tenth of one percent sales tax, and other potential funding options
- Work with other committees, such as INDEX, to make sure they have data
- Review niche issues at the nexus of behavioral health and criminal justice and recommend promising new practices
- Determine what services are already in place and working in the community
- Teacher training, including trauma-informed work
- Apply a GARE overlay to everything they do, including make priorities
- Expand behavioral health capacity locally however possible, such as establishing training programs at local colleges or using local funds that don't have as many restrictions as State or federal funds

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The committee continued to discuss ranking priorities, the advisory committee that reviews and determines expenditures of behavioral health funds in the county, getting a handle on what programs and funding exist now, expanding outreach, and the annual committee report.

Deacon stated she will submit a graphic on all the behavioral health funding sources and how the funding sources are spent. Funds go toward early intervention and prevention, criminal justice diversion, and housing for people with behavioral health problems. As they bring on new funding sources, look at everything they have to see what's missing.

The committee members concurred that they will rank a list of all the committee priorities mentioned.

5. [State Legislation \(01:13:23\)](#)

Hammill stated the City is monitoring over 20 bills at this time. Table this item to the next meeting. He will submit a summary of what bills the City is monitoring as the bills move out of committee.

6. [Identify connector points in the system and facilitate a strong warm handoff process \(01:14:15\)](#)

The committee discussed bringing together the information they have and identify existing connection points, reentry, a potential behavioral health crisis response that connects people to the system, existing connection gaps between the emergency department and the crisis stabilization center, the need for a system of care navigators and coordinators to ensure warm handoff, the need for better transportation between service programs both in and outside of Whatcom County,

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Public Comment

There was no public comment

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.