

From: dbobena@yahoo.com
To: [SAC](#)
Cc: [Council](#); cmail@cob.org
Subject: Suggested considerations for assessing needs
Date: Sunday, May 1, 2022 7:00:12 PM

Dear Stakeholder Advisory Committee:

I have been catching up on the meetings you have held and attended over the last number of weeks. I wanted to contact you about a couple items.

One of those items is related to discussion of GRACE and LEAD diversion programs and their success in preventing and reducing incarceration, as well as drain on emergency services. I can't remember if this was at the [latest Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting](#) or at the [4/19/22 Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force Behavioral Health subcommittee joint meeting with the SAC.](#) I think it was the latter though.

I believe I remember Whatcom County Health Department Director Erika Lautenbach remarking that it would be good to identify the potential of expansion that is possible or needed for LEAD and GRACE. But I don't think that this was specifically pointed to as something that could be relatable when considering the number of jail beds if a new incarceration facility is proposed.

Since any new or improved justice facility will have significant cost to the community and is years away, I think it is important to promote actions that can serve to potentially reduce that cost, but especially provide better results than extra jail beds would. And even though we anticipate that expanding mental and behavioral health-focused services will be costly, if we can provide something that is more successful in creating health, safety, and well-being in our community, then it would end up being the most cost-effective approach we could take.

So, any of the prevention and diversion services on which we have been gaining data that indicates their effectiveness in their intended purpose should be examined for the part they can play on impacting our concepts for and pursuit of justice facilities.

Additionally, I believe that while it is extremely valuable to be receiving input from behavioral, mental, physical health specialists and those who work in the various justice-related agencies that people have to flow through to receive services and accountability, it is also vital to be getting a current exposure to the voices of those with lived experience in the process of flowing through them. I don't know all the avenues for such exposure, but I do know that the Crisis Response Improvement Strategy

(CRIS) Committee that was established in 2021, by [HB 1477](#) has a Lived Experience subcommittee that has been meeting for a couple months now, and their meeting summaries are being posted on this webpage: <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/behavioral-health-recovery/crisis-response-improvement-strategy-cris-committees>.

This is a link to their 3/21/22 meeting

summary: <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/program/cris-lived-experience-subcommittee-meeting-summary-20220321.pdf>

I feel that reading the summaries of their input and contacting appropriate members, along with other sources you may be able to access, can help provide insights into barriers and potential for prevention that health and justice professionals may not have at the front of their minds, or possibly even be aware of.

I understand that the purpose of the Stakeholder Advisory Board is to guide the development of the public health, safety and justice facility needs assessment. I feel that one of the needs that it is important to include is one of ultimately preventing and reducing the usage of such a facility. And so, while you address creating it, it seems there should also be a requirement attached to the project to be stimulating and developing the measures that will eventually eliminate much of the initially intended purpose of the facilities. In light of this, it would also be valuable to review if there is a different way to approach how the facilities are put together, and how much flexibility there is for alternate space usage and purpose.

Lastly, I call on you all to remain firmly grounded in the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring our community together for this work.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Dena Jensen
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