

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force: Legal and Justice Systems Committee

Meeting Summary for July 12, 2022

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1. Call to Order

Committee Chair Raylene King called the meeting to order at 11:31 A.M. The meeting was held via remote-only Zoom Webinar.

Members Present: Caleb Erickson, Arlene Feld, David Freeman, Stephen Gockley, Raylene King, Jackie Mitchell, Eric Richey, Donnell Tanksley, Bruce Van Glubt,

Members Absent: Bill Elfo, Deborah Hawley, Darlene Peterson, Maia Vanyo

2. [Sheriff's Office Co-Responder Alternative Programs \(00:01:06\)](#)

Response Systems Division Supervisor, Perry Mowery, informed the Committee that his division had been the successful bidder in response to a Request for Proposals for establishing a co-responder model in which a mental health professional will respond with law enforcement for behavioral health calls. He gave an overview of what the program will look like in terms of staff, resources, services offered, training, and budget. Committee members discussed and asked questions. Topics included:

- If there is a disagreement between the mental health professional and law enforcement, the mental health professional would stand down if there was a safety issue. Clinical decisions would be made by the mental health professional and the resources that they have access to
- Best practices in emergency situations in which quick decisions need to be made
- Deployment will only be in unincorporated Whatcom County
- The contract is for a three-year period of time, but may be extended indefinitely
- How behavioral health calls will be identified and with which deputies the mental health professionals will be paired with
- Data that will be gathered and what will be done with it
- The possibility of body worn cameras that could be worn by law enforcement and could connect with an off-site mental health professional. King had a video about this program, which was played for Committee members.

3. [Inmate tablet program for reentry, education, and connecting to family support systems \(00:30:05\)](#)

Lieutenant Caleb Erickson with Corrections told the committee that the jail is currently under a contract with a vendor that provides tablets to inmates. The tablets offer access to legal resources, job searches, instant messaging, and entertainment to rent. They are planning on sending out an RFP for a new vendor to provide these as well as other communications systems within the jail. The new vendor could offer other options for inmates, as the technology has changed greatly since tablets were first introduced to the jail two years ago.

Jack Hovenier, who serves on the Executive Committee of the Narcotics Anonymous World Services gave his perspective based on his experience. He stated that many for-profit companies can provide the

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technology and some are bad actors. He advised Erickson to proceed with caution when choosing a vendor.

King shared an article from 2018 that summarized the results from establishing a tablet program in a California county. She said it was important to be able to show the benefits of a program like this, including positive impacts on recidivism rates, virtual hearings, treatment programs, education, job search assistance, and ability to converse privately with counsel or family members.

Gockley asked if there was data being gathered on the Whatcom County program. Erickson responded that they are not because the tablets do not cost the County anything so they do not expect to have push back on it. He added that the RFP stipulates that the cost of the tablets, infrastructure, maintenance, and possible damage are all underwritten by the vendor. He emphasized that they do not want exorbitant fees to be charged to inmates or their families for using the technology. Erickson outlined additional challenges for gathering data.

Judge Freeman asked about the possibility of using the new tablets for conversations with counsel. Erickson said that there were difficulties with this: The tablets are not connected to the internet and cannot be used for external conversations. Currently they use wall mounted units for virtual conversations, and they are not truly private or confidential.

4. Mental Health Sentencing Alternative: RCW 9.94A.695 (continued from June joint meeting)

This item was not discussed

5. [Other Business \(00:56:35\)](#)

King brought up an upcoming discussion of pre-trial services, which is on the agenda for the next meeting of the full Task Force.

6. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:31 P.M.