

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force / Law and Justice Council  
SPECIAL MEETING

Justice Project Implementation Planning

**Workshop #3: Facilities for Community-based Services**  
**Meeting Summary for Thursday, March 23, 2023**

*To view video recording, click on the link in the section heading.*

**1. Call to Order**

Barry Buchanan, Councilmember and Chair of the Justice Project Planning Team, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and welcomed all participants. The meeting was held via remote-only Zoom Webinar and in person at the Whatcom County Council Conference Room, 311 Grand Ave., Suite 105, Bellingham, Washington.

Members Present: Jack Hovenier (Co-chair), Stephen Gockley (Co-chair), Barry Buchanan, Arlene Feld, David Freeman, Heather Flaherty, Darlene Peterson, Donnell Tanksley, Bruce Van Glubt, Scott Korthuis, Eric Petersen, Maialisa Vanyo, Mike Hilley, Deborah Hawley, Satpal Sidhu, Dave Reynolds, Daniel Hammill,

Additional Participants: Tyler Schroeder, Kayla Schott-Bressler, Brian Heinrich, Michael Lilliquist, Wendy Jones, Malora Christensen, Jed Holmes, Doug Chadwick, Caleb Erickson, Louise Trapp, Peter Frazier, Rusty Noble, Rob Ney, David Crass, Chris Kobdich, Erika Lautenbach

Members Absent: Bill Elfo, Greg Winter, Jenn Lockwood, Jason McGill, Eric Richey, Seth Fleetwood, Perry Mowery, Raylene King,

Council Staff: Cathy Halka and Jill Nixon, Whatcom County.

Facilitators: Holly O'Neil and Mardi Solomon, Crossroads Consulting

Stephen Gockley offered a **Land Acknowledgement:** Before we begin, we acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional and unceded territory of the Lummi, Nooksack, Samish and Semiahmoo People who have cared for and tended this land since time immemorial. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference. We begin this effort to acknowledge what has been buried by honoring the truth. We pay respect to their elders past and present. Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today. And please join us in uncovering such truths at any and all public events.

**2. Overview of Implementation Planning Process (00:01:45)**

Public comments are welcome at any time by emailing: [IPRTaskForce@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:IPRTaskForce@co.whatcom.wa.us).

Holly O'Neil reviewed the meeting agenda. She then reiterated the scope of work of this implementation planning process which is to identify actions to advance the recommendations from the [Justice Project Needs Assessment](#) over the next 1-3 years.

The focus of this meeting is on facilities for community-based services. The next workshop will focus on facilities for the jail and accessory services. The April 6 workshop will focus on funding. Note that the date for that workshop is likely to change.

### [3. Follow up from last two meetings on Systems and Services \(00:05:45\)](#)

Since last week's services workshop, progress has been made to compile notes from the two workshop discussions and worksheet input, clarify information with subject matter experts, and refine and synthesize implementation plan ideas. The Implementation Plan will aim for 8-10 feasible projects that address multiple needs and recommendations with a focus on what can be accomplished within the next three years. We will poll for agreement among workshop participants. The Implementation Plan will be revisited in another few years to plan next steps for longer-term projects.

### [4. Discussion of Actions to Implement Facilities Recommendations C2-C4 \(00:13:51\)](#)

In the Needs Assessment, there are three needs and six corresponding recommendations related to facilities for community-based services to prevent and reduce incarceration.

#### [Overview C2: Recommendations 1-4 \(00:15:47\)](#)

**The C2 Need is: Facilities to enable increased community mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment capacity (in-patient & outpatient) to prevent and reduce incarceration and re-incarceration.**

The first three recommendations directly address this need, and the fourth specifies that the location of these facilities needs to work for all stakeholders in the criminal legal system (e.g., employees, incarcerated individuals, service providers, families). The fourth recommendation will not be discussed separately today, but the importance of accessibility should be integrated throughout the Implementation Plan.

**[C2, Rec 1 \(00:16:57\): Explore development of 24/7 Behavioral Health Urgent Care capacity to provide short-term \(23 hours or less\) MH and SUD services.](#)**

Tyler Shroeder described a proposal the County submitted to the state legislature for capital funding for a 24/7 Behavioral Health Urgent Care facility. Participants' comments confirmed general agreement about the value of such a facility to expedite access to MH & SUD services, increase continuity and coordination of care, and prevent incarceration.

**[C2, Rec 2 \(00:55:59\): Research feasibility and desirability of building a secure detox facility in the region for people with SUD who are considered a risk to public safety.](#)**

Participants discussed the need for inpatient SUD treatment, and possible actions to research the feasibility and desirability of developing this type of regional, secure SUD facility. The prevalence of co-occurring MH and SUD disorders and approaching treatment in an integrated way was discussed. A facility of this type is not a project for Whatcom County to take on independently and must be tackled on a regional level with the involvement of the North Sound BH-ASO.

Other significant points raised were that the jail is providing some of these services and they are needed in the jail. The fact that there is not Medicaid reimbursement for in-custody services limits what can be done. A next step is to research the possibility of a state waiver to relieve some of the costs the County is taking on for providing these services.

**[C2, Rec 3 \(01:23:46\): Establish a location in close proximity to the jail from which re-entry specialists, behavioral health staff, system navigators, and peer support providers can offer re-entry support.](#)**

Tyler Schroeder presented information about a proposal submitted by the County for state funding for a Behavioral Health Resource Center to be located downtown to serve as a hub for connection to services, including re-entry services. The Resource Center would serve a broader population than

those involved in the criminal legal system (e.g., people who are homeless, service providers), but would include services for the re-entry/post-incarceration populations, providing a location for “warm handoffs” between jail and community providers.

### **C3 and C4 Needs & Recommendations (01:39:09):**

Both C3 and C4 relate to supportive housing for people with behavioral health issues so the conversation for these two needs and recommendations was combined.

**The C3 Need is: Additional permanent supportive housing with on-site clinical support and intensive case management for people with severe and persistent mental illness who are involved, or at risk of involvement, with the criminal legal system.**

**C3, Rec: Advocate for state, federal, and private funding to expand and improve permanent supportive housing with on-site clinical support and intensive case management for people with serious mental illness who are involved, or at risk of involvement with the criminal legal system.**

**The C4 Need is: Safe, supportive housing for people engaged in diversion and therapeutic court programs (e.g., GRACE and LEAD, Drug Court, Mental Health Court).**

**C4, Rec: Prevent unstable housing from being a barrier to successful engagement with diversion and therapeutic court programs.**

The need for these types of supportive housing was confirmed and recognized as critical to incarceration prevention and for re-entry/post-incarceration success. Creating a continuum of housing options and removing barriers for people to access housing that meets their current needs was an identified goal. Housing services for those involved, or at risk of involvement, with the criminal legal system should be part of ongoing efforts to address housing issues in our county. Many groups currently working on housing were listed and the importance of not duplicating their efforts was emphasized.

Workforce and financial challenges continue to be an issue for service-intensive housing models. Significant state funding will be needed, and some advocacy will be necessary to make sure state funding provides for the models that will work for Whatcom County.

### **5. Next Steps and Closing Comments (02:17:14)**

The next meeting is about the jail and accessory facilities, **Thurs. March 30, 9:30-12:00.**

Meeting adjourned 11:54 a.m.