

Washington State Criminal Sentencing Task Force
Reentry & Reducing Recidivism Working Group
Meeting Summary: July 13, 2020
Zoom Digital Conferencing Technology

Attendees:

- Mac Pevey
- Jon Tunheim
- Chief James Schrimpscher
- Chris Poulos
- Nick Allen
- Sec. Sinclair
- Rep. Goodman
- Rep. Klippert
- Sonja Hallum
- Suzanne Cook
- Martina Kartman
- Melody Simle

Facilitation Team: Molly Stenovec, Amanda Murphy, Chris Page and Maggie Counihan

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Molly welcomed the Reentry and Reducing Recidivism Working Group members and guests and reviewed the agenda. The meeting focus was reviewing and discussing potential recommendations around Community-Based Involvement, Rehabilitative Services, and Roles for Victims in Release and Reentry.

Potential Recommendations: Community Based Involvement – Chris Poulos

Increase accessibility and decrease costs related to family interaction

- Chris noted a county of origin [law](#) that requires an individual's release from incarceration in the county where their first offense occurred. This can present barriers to reentry when family and support networks lie elsewhere.
- Members said that there could be significant county pushback to changes of the county of origin, and it would be important to make sure there is no adverse impact on victims.
- Chris stated that when healthy and appropriate, family should be involved in the reentry process.

Reduce costs for incarcerated persons to communicate with family members

- Suzanne noted that individuals with the longest sentences go to locations spread widely across the state (Clallam Bay, Walla Walla), and before release some individuals get sent to other locations across the state to complete a particular program before release.
- The vendor DOC uses for communication (phone calls) is expensive for families, many of which are struggling financially.

Fund community organizations to provide mentorship and credible messaging prior to, during, and following release.

- Chris noted the importance of having positive relationships that start while incarcerated and continue after release and during reentry.
- Currently individuals may not continue relationships (for example: AA mentors) with each other outside of confinement due to DOC policy.

Statewide Reentry Council (the Council) and state Department of Commerce should administer contracts to community organizations.

- The Council's position is that state funds should go through the Dept. of Commerce to various community organizations.

Potential Recommendations: Rehabilitative Services – Chris Poulos

Increase funding availability for vocational training and education, including higher education within DOC facilities and county jails.

- Make time during incarceration as meaningful as possible (for example: trade training program at Mission Creek).
- Determine the workforce needs in the state and prepare individuals to fill skilled worker gaps on released so they can have living-wage jobs.
- Community colleges try to plan education opportunities around jobs that will be needed in the near future and could provide an opportunity for partnerships or curricula.
- A member suggested establishing an accelerated program that trains people in trade/job skills so that once an individual earns a certification, they get an accelerated exit from incarceration. This could be a great place for Dept. of Commerce to help connect individuals with jobs. The workgroup member also suggested a business tax incentive for employers of incarcerated individuals.

Increase access to safe and affordable housing for people with records.

- Chris noted the number one barrier to successful reentry is housing. He suggested continuing the housing voucher program.
- Members described contracted housing that does not seem to support successful reentry.
- **Q:** Who manages the facilities? **R:** It is left up to local jurisdictions
- Another member mentioned that increasing performance-based housing with contractors would be great.
- Chris mentioned a second part of the potential recommendation could be looking at creative ways to increase housing.
- Mac noted that DOC has a longstanding Memorandum of Understanding on housing with the city of Tacoma and that often individuals in housing are those not on supervision.
- Members support the idea of the Task Force putting forward a housing-related recommendation.
- **Q:** Is this an area for a partnership for DOC, Dept. of Commerce, and the Reentry Council? Chris agreed that this would be worth exploring.

Next steps:

- Chris, Mac, and Sec. Sinclair will work on specific language for recommendations to bring back to the group.

Potential Recommendations: Roles for Victims in Release and Reentry - Martina Kartman

Victim/Offender Dialogue (VOD)

- Martina described significant desire from victims to engage in dialogue with harm-doers and said the DOC VOD program has been really great.
- Currently, the VOD program is only for individuals in total confinement and it would help to expand the opportunity for dialogue, for example to individuals under community supervision and work release.
- **Q:** Does DOC keep data on the success rate of the dialogues in terms of its potential impact on recidivism? **R:** Martina said she has national and global data that she can send and noted that data has shown that the more serious the harm the more likely someone wants answers. It is powerful for someone who has experienced harm to create agency. A lot of background work happens before having a dialogue. She said part of a potential recommendation should address DOC policy, and another part would be resource-based to provide facilitators statewide.

More robust resources for victims

- Martina noted that a large majority of people (especially minority populations) opt out of services offered during the course of a case. Providing more resources for victims could serve as a crime prevention tool too.
- Martina suggested it would help to have services available to victims when an individual gets released (instead of only a notification), with more significant resources going to communities that experience the most harm.
- A member noted that it would be nice to see data on where money deducted from incarcerated individuals' accounts goes.
- There is a lot of bureaucratic red tape that victims have to go through. For example, victims must get an original copy of a police report instead of using court documents.
- Martina mentioned eligibility requirements for victims to benefit from resources that include being innocent of crime and participating in the trial. Victims are only eligible for bereavement therapy during specific time periods, but healing does not happen on a timeline.

Notifications to Victims

- Martina mentioned that if victims are notified (sometimes they are not), they receive a form letter that can be triggering.
- Setting appropriate expectation and clarity around victims' opportunities to voice concerns or requests would support victims and balance successful reentry.
- Members noted that enhancing support for victims is important.

Next steps:

- Martina and Chief Schrimpsheer will meet and talk about potential recommendations related to victims

**Washington State Criminal Sentencing Task Force
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Meeting Summary: July 27, 2020
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Attendees:

- Mac Pevey
- Jon Tunheim
- Chief James Schrimpscher
- Chris Poulos
- Nick Allen
- Sec. Sinclair
- Rep. Goodman
- Rep. Klippert
- Sonja Hallum
- Suzanne Cook
- Martina Kartman
- Russ Brown
- Rep. Davis (guest)
- Brittany Lovely (guest)

Facilitation Team: Molly Stenovec, Amanda Murphy, Chris Page and Maggie Counihan

WELCOME & AGENDA REVIEW

Molly welcomed Reentry and Reducing Recidivism Working Group members and guests and described how the facilitation team has organized the potential recommendations. The meeting focus would be reviewing and discussing updated potential recommendations around Community Based Involvement in Resources, Programs, & Rehabilitative Services.

NOTE: bullets below each emerging recommendation denote discussion points.

Potential Recommendation #17: Support Department of Corrections (DOC) programs and policy changes that increase opportunities and accessibility for family engagement, when appropriate, during reentry planning.

- Chris Poulos noted that based on conversations at the last Reentry working group meeting, the basic takeaway is a desire to see families involved in the process as long as there are no victim concerns.
- Members agreed to bring this recommendation to the full Task Force.

Potential Recommendation #18: Increase DOC's ability to consider proximity to family when determining incarceration and release locations.

- Members expressed concern about county of origin and release locations, agreeing that counties need to be consulted.
- Some noted the importance of proximity to programs and other resources
- Members asked if data could be provided on the total number of county-of-origin requests and how many of those get approved.

Action item: Mac and Chris Poulos will review DOC data related to country of origin and bring the findings back to the working group, including whether those findings suggest that a recommendation is needed; if so, they will draft language for that potential recommendation.

Potential Recommendation #19: Support policy changes and establishment of criteria that allow individuals to engage with faith leaders, mentors, and/or volunteers prior, during, and following release.

- Members noted that DOC is reviewing this policy and they have interest in making some changes.
- Members agreed to bring this recommendation to the full Task Force.

Potential Recommendation #20: Continue to provide resources for the Statewide Reentry Council to partner with community organizations that provide mentorship and credible messaging to individuals prior, during, and following release. Prioritize support to organizations that employ people with lived experience.

- Chris Poulos noted that currently the Statewide Reentry Council and Dept. of Commerce administer funds to community-based organizations to provide services to individuals exiting prisons and jails. They would like to see the funding continue and increase.

Potential Recommendation #21: Support partnerships among DOC, Reentry Council, Dept. of Commerce, and entities delivering vocational/educational programming to increase access to skill-building opportunities and connect individuals with employment opportunities upon release. Increase funding and accessibility for vocational training and education within DOC facilities and jails.

- Members discussed programs in place at various DOC facilities. DOC created a document that lists what is currently available. Members will review before the next meeting.
- The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) is under contract with the Washington Student Achievement Council and DOC to look at Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)-funded programs. The WSIPP report will be finished later this year.
- Members discussed having DOC present information about current program offerings. It would provide the group with a foundational understanding about what is happening.

Action items:

- Secretary Sinclair will ask Danielle Armbruster to present on current DOC programming at the next working group meeting.
- All working group members will review DOC documentation on current programs.
- Members agreed to combine the below potential recommendation with this one.

Potential recommendation: Increase investment in skills training for persons incarcerated by DOC, and for persons under community supervision. Identify training programs that provide a person skills training that will sustain them after they are no longer DOC responsibility. Once those persons receive that skills training provide a pathway to employment.

- See above action items.

Potential Recommendation #23: Develop incentives for businesses and organizations that hire individuals who complete vocation/educational programming while incarcerated.

- Members discussed possibilities of a tax credit and noted that there currently is a federal tax credit available for employers who hire a formerly incarcerated individual.
- The group also discussed identifying areas of the economy that need employees and how Dept. of Commerce could help forecast those areas.

Action items: Chris Poulos and Secretary Sinclair will rewrite potential recommendation #23 to better address/ account for the current (and future) difficult economic times

The group agreed the following **potential recommendation** was a repeat and agreed to delete it: Continue to provide resources for the Statewide Reentry Council to partner with community organizations which provide reentry services.

Potential Recommendation #24: Establish performance-based criteria for housing providers.

- Members discussed having a presentation on this at a future meeting.

- Members had questions about zoning challenges around housing individuals released from DOC facilities.

Action item: Mac Pevey is willing to provide a local example of zoning challenges at the next working group meeting.

Potential Recommendation #25: Develop incentives for reentry housing providers, which includes opportunities for vacant buildings/units to become safe and affordable reentry housing.

- Members discussed ideas for building housing while incarcerated.

Potential Recommendation #26: Support partnership between the Reentry Council and Department of Commerce to provide assistance and reduce barriers to accessing reentry housing.

- Members expressed interest in the Reentry Council working with Department of Commerce to understand such barriers and identify ways to address them.

Action item: The Facilitation Team will ask contacts at the Department of Commerce that work on Growth Management and Housing to connect with Chris Poulos to discuss the working group's thinking around potential recommendations 25 and 26, including identifying zoning challenges related to housing and individuals getting released out of DOC facilities.

Next Steps & summary of action items:

- **All working group members:** Your facilitation team has updated the potential recommendations document based on your conversations. Please review to ensure that we've accurately captured your discussions and send comments/questions to Maggie.counihan@wsu.edu or sentencing.taskforce.ruckelshaus@wsu.edu. Green highlighted text = working group has finalized and agreed to put the potential recommendation before the full Task Force in September. Yellow highlights = call attention to the actions/information gathering efforts described in the following bullets.
- **Mac and Chris Poulos** will review DOC data related to country of origin and bring the findings back to the working group, including whether those findings suggest that a recommendation is needed; if so, they will draft language for that potential recommendation.
- **Secretary Sinclair will ask Danielle Armbruster** to present on current DOC programming at the next working group meeting.
- **All working group members** will review DOC documentation on current programs (see attachments).
- **Chris Poulos and Secretary Sinclair** will rewrite potential recommendation #23 to better address/ account for the current (and future) difficult economic times
- **Mac Pevey** is willing to provide a local example of zoning challenges at the next working group meeting.
- The **Facilitation Team** will ask contacts at the Department of Commerce that work on Growth Management and Housing to connect with **Chris Poulos** to discuss the working group's thinking around potential recommendations 25 and 26, including identifying zoning challenges related to housing and individuals getting released out of DOC facilities.

REMINDER: contact the facilitation team if members have any suggestions!