

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

Attendees:

- Nick Allen, *Interests of Incarcerated Individuals*
- Suzanne Cook, *Statewide Family Council*
- Representative Roger Goodman, *Washington State House of Representatives, Democratic Caucus*
- Sonja Hallum, *Washington State Office of the Governor*
- Martina Kartman, *Interests of Crime Victims*
- Representative Brad Klippert, *Washington State House of Representatives, Republican Caucus*
- Mac Pevey (alt. for Secretary Sinclair), *Washington State Department of Corrections*
- Chris Poulos (alt. for Lydia Flora Barlow), *Statewide Reentry Council*
- Melody Simle (alt. for Suzanne Cook), *Statewide Family Council*
- Secretary Steve Sinclair, *Washington State Department of Corrections*
- Chief James Schrimpscher, *Washington State Fraternal Order of Police*
- Jon Tunheim, *Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys*

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

WELCOME & AGENDA REVIEW

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

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.

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 & ACTION ITEMS

- **Chris, Mac, and Sec. Sinclair** will work on specific language for recommendations to bring back to the group.
- **Martina and Chief Schrimpsheer** will meet and talk about potential recommendations related to victims.