

**Washington State Criminal Sentencing Task Force**  
**DRAFT Meeting Summary: May 20, 2021**  
[Virtual Meeting via ZOOM](#)

*All Task Force meetings are recorded and available on TVW. This summary is a high-level overview of the meeting. For detailed information, please see video recording linked above*

**Task Force Members & Alternates Attending:**

- Nick Allen
- Dashni Amin (co-alt. for Martina Kartman)
- Tiffany Attrill
- Lydia Flora Barlow
- Russ Brown (alt. for Jon Tunheim)
- Chief Gregory Cobb
- Suzanne Cook
- Judge Veronica Galvan
- Representative Roger Goodman
- Keri-Anne Jetzer (alt. for Judge Saint Clair)
- Gregory Link
- Ginny Parham (alt. for Waldo Waldron-Ramsey)
- Chris Poulos (alt. for Lydia Flora Barlow)
- Mac Pevey (alt for Sec. Strange)
- Judge Wesley Saint Clair
- Chief James Schrimpsheer
- Melody Simle (alt. for Suzanne Cook)
- Clela Steelhammer (alt. for Elaine Deschamps)
- Sec. Cheryl Strange
- Jon Tunheim
- Waldo Waldron-Ramsey
- Judge Josephine Wiggs-Martin
- Councilmember Derek Young

**Guests/Additional Participants:**

- Damon Brown
- Cindy Carr
- Kelsey-Anne Fung
- Bruce Glant
- Davina Kerrelola
- Carra Morgan
- Sydney Oliver
- Joanne Smieja
- David Triewweiler
- Kehaulani Walker
- Paige Wanner

**Facilitation Team:** Amanda Murphy, Chris Page, Molly Stenovec, Hannah Kennedy, Maggie Counihan – William D. Ruckelshaus Center

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**MEETING GOALS:** Check-ins and updates • Review Task Force workplan for the grid • Dialog on public safety

**WELCOME, REVIEW AGENDA, and KEY GROUNDRULES**

Amanda welcomed Task Force members, alternates, and guests. She reviewed the meeting agenda and goals and reminded the public and interested guests to send questions by chat to Molly; per usual the facilitation team would save time at the end for folks to share comments or questions with the Task Force. Chris reviewed the ground rules.

## **INTRODUCTIONS**

Members and alternates introduced themselves. The Task Force welcomed a new member: Secretary Cheryl Strange, representing the Department of Corrections.

## **UPDATES FROM CO-CHAIRS**

Co-chairs asked the Task Force to lean into the conversations on public safety and truly listen to each other. They noted that grid conversations get technical, and it is important not to forget the impact these decisions have on individuals.

## **GRID SUBGROUP UPDATE**

Subgroup members recapped recent grid discussions, including:

- a walk-through of the current grid and a proposed felony class-based grid,
- conversations on the vertical axis, and
- looking at cell ranges and potentially zones.

Instead of analyzing how to structure the vertical axis of the grid, the Grid Subgroup decided to take an ‘inside-out’ approach to the grid by beginning with consideration of cell ranges and sentence lengths. Amanda reminded the Task Force that WSIPP and Lauren will run another research simulation of whichever grid is recommended by the Task Force.

**Q:** Is there general agreement in the Subgroup on the approach? **R:** No split in the Subgroup, folks are just trying to ascertain how best to sequence the discussion.

Other members commented on:

- building in alternatives on the lower end of the grid,
- the need for more transparency in the grid,
- the ability to measure the impact of any changes,
- addressing disproportionality, and
- a suggestion for a unified data system across the state.

## **DIALOG ON PUBLIC SAFETY**

Amanda shared compiled notes on Task Force suggestions for improving public safety from the first meeting in 2019. Members and alternates and guests were asked to think about the following questions in their breakout rooms.

- What is public safety? What does it look like?
- What needs to be promoted and improved? Why?
- Ideas about how to promote and improve?

The following list summarizes common themes/responses from each breakout room.

### Task Force Breakout Group #1:

- Public safety is greatly impacted by what happens within the criminal legal system.
  - Prisons are often violent places. When we sentence individuals convicted of crimes to places of violence, we can expect violence upon release.
- Fear often drives discussions and decisions about public safety.

- We’ve only ever focused on punishment. Some feel punishment has a place in our approach to public safety, but it should be a last resort.
- “Hurt people hurt people.” Violence and trauma often breed more violence, trauma and are intergenerational, and public safety responses must address the trauma caused if we are to disrupt the cycle of violence.
- Rehabilitation, education, and hope are important to promoting public safety. People are not disposable. We need to invest in individuals, give opportunities to learn and rebuild.
- We can’t have public safety without healthy communities.

Task Force Breakout Group #2 (in response to “What Does Public Safety Look Like?”):

- People feel safe in homes and communities, so public safety has both physical and mental aspects.
- Individuals in prison are treated humanely, and not treated differently upon exit of prison.
- The absence of threats and absence of fear.
- That a community has confidence in the fairness of what’s happening in institutional systems.
  - Opportunities for communities to be healthy and thrive- jobs and education availability.
- Not causing further harm in responses to public safety threats
- Lots of links to public health- about prevention of crime for public safety.
  - Provide opportunities for people to change, recognize that it’s a public health problem.
- Idea that the protection of the public has been a core function of government, shifting to the idea of individual public safety. What is the collective responsibility and of government to individual safety?
- Need to define public safety and have a shared definition. Are we only talking about the criminal justice system, or a broader definition?
- Acknowledge the historical and societal impacts.
- What’s the strategic connection between sentencing and public safety? What can we do to reduce the possibility a person would contribute more harm to their community?
- Need to communicate with all the connectors to public safety.

Public Guests Breakout Group:

- Moving around without fear.
- having a system that is compassionate and mindful.

Guest suggestions for reaching that vision of public safety included:

- Increased/greater opportunities for supporting families before individuals enter the system.
- Programming/training opportunities while individuals are incarcerated.
- Access to mental health treatment and professionals.

- Long term impacts of having a conviction.
- More restorative justice opportunities.

The group also discussed the long-term challenges individuals with a felony conviction face as they seek housing, employment, etc post-incarceration.

### FULL TASK FORCE DISCUSSION

Amanda and Chris asked each member and alternate to share what they learned and discussed in their breakout room. Common responses included:

- Public safety definitions that were broad and narrow.
  - Reduce instances of crime.
  - Are communities set up to thrive?
- Providing more individualization in programming for people. Trauma-informed service. Investing in education and programming in prison.
- It's a continuum, and incarceration should be about separation and not punishment.
- Sentencing reform is one piece of the puzzle.
- The preventative and reactive sides to public safety.

### QUESTIONS FROM OBSERVERS

- **C:** Happy to hear ideas for alternatives for people who have not harmed someone.
- **Q:** Has the Task Force talked about how record keeping is being kept? **R:** There is a centralized place where Judgement & Sentencing (J&S) forms are kept, and that data could be used to measure changes to the grid. There is no common database across the entire system. **R:** The Caseload Forecast Council is required by statute to collect J&S forms.
- **Q:** Is the next step to look at the vertical level of the grid? **R:** No decisions have been made about changes to the grid. Just a decision to start the discussion on the structural components of the grid. The discussion will be informed by the research by WSIPP and other states' grids.

### NEXT STEPS and ADJOURN

Next meeting is June 3rd, from 1pm-4:30pm

#### Upcoming Meetings:

June 17, from 9am – 12:30

July 1, 1 pm – 4:30 pm

July 15, 9 am – 12:30

August 5, 1 pm – 4:30 pm

August 19, 9 am – 12:30

September 2, 1 pm – 4:30 pm

Sept. 16, 9 am – 12:30

October 7, 1 pm – 4:30 pm

October 21, 9 am – 12:30

November 4, 1 pm – 4:30 pm

November 18, 9 am – 12:30

December 2, 1 pm – 4:30 pm

December 16, 9 am – 12:30