

## **Criminal Justice Collaborative Council (Inmate Reintegration Committee)**

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### **Meeting Minutes**

June 3, 2005

220 N. Main, Lower Level Conference Room

Ann Arbor, MI

12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Barbara Levin Bergman (Inmate Reintegration Committee Chair), Scott Patton (CJCC Staff), Ruth Shabazz (Shelter Association of Washtenaw County), Ruby Smith (ETCS Community Programs), Deb Pippins (Supervisor Project Outreach, CSTS), Kirk Filsinger (Jail Commander), Sheila Blakney (Senior Assistant, Public Defender), Rick Visel (Director, Correctional Services), Diane Davidson (Director of Development/Finance, Washtenaw Housing Alliance), Mike Echlin (22<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court Probations Agent)

**Convened:** 12:30 p.m.

### **I. Update on Inmate Health Committee**

Rick Visel reported that over the past year, the Jail Health Oversight Committee has been utilizing an inter-disciplinary collaborative approach to issues on reconnecting inmates back to specific services. He cited veteran services as an example of how they have tried to reconnect inmates who were veterans back with Veterans Administration upon release from the jail. Scott Patton mentioned that the Washtenaw Health Plan was also being set up for inmates who are indigent upon their release from the jail.

Rick Visel also noted that they also met with the overseers of the Michigan Health Plan and talked about the needs of our population. They have posted flyers/brochures in the waiting area of the medical department for interested inmates who wish to reconnect to these two services that the county offers.

Discussion ensued on the accessibility of these services for inmates, what is the best process for engaging the inmate to avail of these services, and assisting them with filling out forms. Barbara Levin Bergman advised an intake screening for eligibility for Veterans Services. Diane Davidson added that Social Security and Medicaid eligibility (after inmate is released) based on income or disability status can also be done at this point. Ruth Shabazz noted that this process can be done at three places: the jail, Veterans Administration, or the Homeless Shelter (if inmates end up there).

Diane Davidson advised determining eligibility requirements with one assessment tool. Barbara Levin Bergman said that if intake constraints do not allow for use of this assessment tool, then the information can be given to appropriate staff to make sure the linkage is made whether in the first 72 hours. It may even pay to get this eligibility information to the public defender so inmate can get assistance.

Discussion ensued on how staff can assist inmates in filling out the complex application forms for Social Security and Medicaid benefits. Barbara Levin Bergman said that if the need arose, the committee may recommend to the CJCC the employment of additional staff to help with this process. Sheila Blakney suggested asking legal services to have classes at the jail to provide social security, legal resource center, as well. She noted that inmates who are 60 years old and over are automatically eligible for legal services regardless of income. Funding is provided by Area Agency on Aging. Ruth Shabazz said that there is a need to educate the inmates that the

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Social Security process is a long process which may require them to think of alternative sources of funding. Deb Pippins said that they have legal staff and resources to assist inmates from the application to the hearing process.

Barbara Levin Bergman advised that Rick Visel notify the group if his staff is being stretched thin as a result of these additional services and the development of a centralized assessment center in the future. If the assessment center does not work, then his staff should alternatives like medical screening. Sheila Blakney suggested setting up a process now, even if not formalized, whereby inmates are screened for veteran status, and referred to services. Barbara Levin Bergman said that the process should be initiated not by the inmate but the agency. Diane Davidson said that engaging inmates, such as helping them can keep appointments or track phone numbers, should be part of the process until inmates are in a state of readiness.

Deb Pippins said that there is a new federal program that will suspend, rather than stop, benefits while the inmate is incarcerated. Diane Davidson will find the statewide website that is a screening website. After a series of questions, the site will indicate whether the applicant is eligible for any federal or state benefit program. Ruth Shabazz noted that while the system is not ideal, it does provide an overview of possibilities. The disc of the program is also available.

Diane Davidson will forward the statewide website to members. Sheila Blakney will make the connections with legal services and coordinate with Rick Visel on possible classes to assist inmates with services.

### **II. Corrections Learning Network Briefing**

Rick Visel reported on the federal agency, Corrections Learning Network, which may be incorporated into the jail. It requires the institution to have a hookup to a satellite feed from Spokane, Washington. As soon as participation is seen, grant dollars become available for operations based on the institution's utilization.

Rick Visel gave an example of the monthly programming for the month for inmate population and staff. These programs can be recorded for future viewing, when a facilitator may be available. A lot of jails have plugged this into their TV system and is the only channel that inmates can get. Programming includes segments on how to start a business, money management, defensive driving, self-help, and preparation for GED. He noted that this tool is underutilized since there is a lack of facilitators who can focus inmate attention on the programs, monitor progress, and get feedback. Rick Visel will call for a referral list of places that currently employ the tool and what populations are utilizing it, in order to get some sense of its value.

Rick Visel clarified that this had been an ongoing request from ITS three years ago. Members noted that this request has now been removed from ITS's list. Barbara Levin Bergman noted that management issues are present in this recommendation that need to be explored. Scott Patton will forward the form to Rick Visel to make an infrastructure request. The form will request a list of how this supports business operations, what improvements will be made as a result, and how this will impact the outcomes in the Sheriff's Office operations.

Sheila Blakney said that judges may consider programming completion as a condition of sentencing. Barbara Levin Bergman recommended that the group study further if this tool can be an added value after evaluating costs, use, and whether Community Corrections can facilitate.

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### **III. Gap Analysis**

Scott Patton led members on an analysis of the gaps in the system for inmate reintegration. Kirk Filsinger passed out to members copies of a survey initiated by the Sheriff's staff a year ago that asked inmates what they needed to integrate successfully back into the community. Scott Patton indicated that the gap analysis would be structured along the following questions:

- A. What does an inmate need to successfully reintegrate into the community?
- B. Which are the most important?
- C. What resources currently exist in the community that could address these issues?
- D. How can we connect the resources to the inmates?

Members identified the following as important elements with which inmates can be assisted. They also added discussion points which addressed existing community resources and the process whereby inmates may be connected to resources:

#### **A. Identification**

Scott Patton said that inmates had difficulty getting identification. Ruth Shabazz agreed that when people show up in the shelter without I.D., their intake process is much longer. Deb Pippins indicated that the problem lay with inmates who have to ask for these services. Barbara Levin Bergman advised that the Sheriff's Department should automatically release a convenient and water-proof picture I.D., perhaps in a cheap plastic wallet, to inmates at release.

Rick Visel said that the Records Division in Correctional Services already provides a letter of authenticity that the Sheriff's Department has identified them through their fingerprints. The State of Michigan will give them a state-issued I.D. based on that paperwork. He clarified that this process is fairly recent since it has been only practiced in the past year. He said it is not currently an automatic process since it is person-driven. He also noted that identifying inmates with multiple names is also an issue and would require staff and resources to research.

Members discussed whether this should be changed to an automatic process for all inmates upon release, and how the process can be facilitated. Members also discussed what needs to be changed in the system to assist an inmate being released with getting I.D. in a simple and fool-proof process. Sheila Blakney suggested that inmates could be asked whether they require I.D. at initial intake, rather than upon release.

Members asked about the mandatory fee for inmates requesting to get this I.D. within 24 hours of release. Rick Visel clarified that there is 1) a \$12 state-mandated booking fee and the money goes to the corrections training council, and 2) a \$10 county fee. Members agreed that this fee should be studied further to see what consequences it has on the I.D. process.

#### **B. Mental Health Services**

Deb Pippins clarified that inmates with mental health needs are not automatically assigned a case worker while they are in the jail. Barbara Levin Bergman said that CSTS also cannot send the same number of case workers in and out of the jail to engage these clients. Deb Pippins said that there is a current process whereby a CSTS representative in the jail coordinates between the case worker and the inmate. The cases are not closed when they leave the jail.

However, there is an issue with inmates not getting the same kind of service outside of the jail. Rick Visel said that inmates with mental health needs get started on medications that stabilize their condition, but are then unable to continue these after release. Barbara Levin Bergman said that not all inmates are eligible to receive CSTS services upon release from the jail, according to

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the code. She added that inmates need referrals to such places as Packard Clinic or to places which provide non-code mental health services.

Diane Davidson also said that if an inmate is not assessed while in the jail, another issue is who pays for the assessment while the inmate is in probation. The Probation Officer believes the inmate has a mental health issue, but the Probation Department has no funds to pay for the assessment, especially if the inmate is not eligible for CSTS funding.

### **C. Substance Abuse Services**

Rick Visel noted that only 56% of inmates surveyed said that substance abuse is a problem that needs to be addressed. As a result, access to substance abuse services may not be as important concern. Sheila Blakney said that this is not surprising since inmates do not recognize substance abuse, such as alcohol, as destructive. Consequently, the two highest-rated issues for inmates are job skills and trade training, and assistance with job placement.

### **D. Medical Follow-up**

Barbara Levin Bergman said that the county can do more with medical follow-up, than with mental health services, as these are less restricted.

### **E. Employment**

Ruby Smith indicated that there are gaps in the following: interviewing skills, learning how to fill out applications appropriately, personal hygiene, clothing, etiquette skills, resume writing, and computer skills. She added that former inmates fail on the interview because they lack appropriate social skills.

These are services that Michigan Works provide at Community Corrections and the Homeless Shelter. Ruby Smith said that they also direct interested parties to a free basic computer training at Washtenaw Community College. She indicated that the facility on Harriet Street offers greater services. Diane Davidson clarified that this facility is geared more for customers who can navigate through the system on their own, rather than someone who needs assistance.

### **F. Food**

### **G. Transportation**

### **H. Clothing**

### **I. Income**

### **J. Benefits**

Mike Echlin noted that this encompasses: eligibility, supports, Medicare, entitlements (i.e. SSI, SSA, Medicaid, VA, TANF).

### **K. Child Care**

Ruth Shabazz indicated that scholarships are available for Child Care.

### **L. Child Support**

### **M. Tax Help**

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### **N. Family Counseling**

Barbara Levin Bergman clarified that this type of counseling focuses on reintegrating a former inmate back into a family that may have done well independent of this person. Ruth Shabazz noted that this is a very similar situation to substance abusers who has been away from their family and had been effectively marginalized.

Sheila Blakney said that these should also pay attention to children's needs. She reported that Catholic Social Services received a grant to mentor children while their parent is incarcerated. They are currently looking for referrals.

### **O. Education**

### **P. Housing**

### **Q. Mentoring**

Barbara Levin Bergman explained that mentoring would start with inmates who are in jail longer than 15 days. The mentor will inform inmate of issues on housing, employment, services. This person will serve as the inmate's advocate and role model. She said that these should be volunteers who are not affiliated with a church-based organization who can serve as the mid-term or long-term bridge between the inmate and community services. Kirk Filsinger said that this person can also serve as support for former inmates who encounter problems with employment, housing, etc. In this way, recidivism is addressed.

Ruth Shabazz said that the model which currently exists is the 12-step program for substance abuse, which uses sponsors. Members agreed that rather than reinvent the wheel, the group should research best practices.

### **IV. Next Steps**

- Scott Patton and George Siasoco will capture the feedback from the group and put it all together into a document.
- Scott Patton will use what the inmates said were important items that they needed support from services and will guide discussion next time.

### **V. State Prisoner Reentry Meeting**

Scott Patton said that there will be an informational meeting on the State Prisoner Reentry Program on Monday, June 6, 2005, at 5:30 p.m. The venue will be at the King of Kings Lutheran Church. He forwarded the invitation to members, and Ruby Smith and Sheila Blakney have already said they will attend. Barbara Levin Bergman said that it was an informational meeting which would allow committee members to speak about its charter.

### **VI. Faith-Based Organization Representative**

Barbara Levin Bergman said a faith-based representative should also attend the committee meetings. She suggested inviting Penny Ryder of the American Friends Service Committee, given her presence within the faith-based community. Sheila Blakney said that the Prosecutor's Office had declined to participate in the committee meetings. Scott Patton noted that Judge Archie Brown is satisfied with monthly updates from the committee, which he would forward to his colleagues in the judicial bench.

**Adjourned:** 2:00 p.m.

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Next Inmate Reintegration Subcommittee meeting will be on 7/06/05, **12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.**, at Annex First Floor Conference Room.

**Gap Analysis Chart for Inmate Reintegration (DRAFT)**

Inmate Need	Importance	Existing Community Resources	Process to Connect Resource to Inmate
Identification (Issue: Booking fees within 24 hours, \$22)		Records Division provides person-driven identification process	
Mental Health Services (Case Management, Psychiatry, Medication)		CSTS Representative while in jail. After release, CSTS for those who qualify. For those that not qualify, referrals to Packard Clinic or places which provide non-code mental health services	
Substance Abuse Services (Referrals, eligibility determination)			
Medical Follow-Up			
Employment (interviewing skills, filling out applications, personal hygiene, clothing, etiquette, resume writing, computer skills, social skills)	High	Services provided by Michigan Works at Community Corrections and Homeless Shelter, free computer training at Washtenaw Community College, Harriet Street Facility	
Food			
Transportation			
Clothing			
Income			
Benefits (eligibility, supports, entitlements such as SSI/SSA/Medicaid/VA/TANF, Medicare)			
Child Care		Scholarships available	
Child Support			
Tax Help			

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Family Counseling		Catholic Social Services grant for mentoring children while parent is incarcerated	
Housing	High		
Education			
Mentoring		Best Practices? Use 12-step program for substance abuse treatment as model, Use volunteers as inmate advocate	