

# **CJCC Inmate Reintegration Committee**

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## **Inmate Reintegration Committee Meeting Minutes**

December 07, 2005

Annex Building, First Floor Conference Room

Ann Arbor, MI

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Mike Echlin, Deb Pippins, Diane Davidson, Ruth Shabazz, Ruby Smith, Penny Marshall, Scott Patton, Rick Visel, Barbara Levin Bergman, George Siasoco, Steve Hiller, Sheila Blakney, Delphia Simpson

**Meeting called to order at 12:30 p.m.**

### **I. Approve Minutes**

Diane Davidson moved, Mike Echlin supported, and members unanimously approved the minutes from the previous meeting.

### **II. Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (MPRI)**

Scott Patton noted that a steering committee meeting will occur within the next two weeks. Penny Marshall mentioned that there have been over twenty members and have prepared a slate of potential members. The Board of Commissioners will appoint committee members for the steering committee. In addition, there will be a second group that will assist with the implementation.

### **III. Gap Analysis**

Scott Patton advised that as soon as the gap analysis is completed, the committee clearly present the information in a format that will be helpful to Rick Visel's staff. If an issue exists, the resources are listed. Diane Davidson said that it can also be used to produce a template of appropriate questions that mentors can discuss with inmates. Ruth Shabazz offered to assist in forming this template, as the Shelter already uses a similar template. Scott Patton said that the Inmate Reintegration Committee report will include this gap analysis and supporting documents, such as the questionnaire.

#### **A. Legal**

Members contributed the following resources: Dispute Resolution Center, Legal Resource Center, Legal Services of South Central Michigan (LSSCM), Street Outreach Court, Attorney Consultation at Shelter, Social Security Appeals, Michigan Poverty Law Program, Lawyer Referral Service, Attorney of the Day (Public Defender), University of Michigan Legal Clinics, Michigan Tenants Organization (Delphia Simpson has the contact information for them).

#### **B. Mentoring**

Delphia Simpson said that Salvation Army has a mentoring program. Members agreed that "faith-based organization" will be taken out as it limits the organizations that can offer mentors. Penny Marshall said that there is a mentoring program based on one of the MPRI programs. There is a state-endorsed mentoring program which she has information to forward to members. Diane Davidson clarified that the mentoring program would create a list of key questions a mentor would ask an offender.

#### **C. Education**

Rick Visel said that the Corrections Department is still offering GED programs in the jail. Members discussed the costs that prohibit person from taking the GED test. Ruby Smith

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indicated that Michigan Works has a resource training program. Stone School and Ypsilanti Public Schools offer training, education, and adult graduation program without funding. Options are available for different levels of education needs. Members agreed to have the gap analysis “education” category refer to resources under the “employment/training” category.

### **D. Family Counseling**

Members contributed the following resources: Catholic Family Services, Jewish Family Services, Help Source, Women’s Center of America, and Veterans Administration offer counseling. Salvation Army does case work for spiritually focused counseling.

### **E. Tax Help**

Women’s Center of America offers counseling but they need to have a certain income classification. Ruth Shabazz said that around tax time, various community groups offer tax help from year to year. These agencies advertise through flyers. Diane Davidson said that Project Serve at University of Michigan may have links to tax help.

### **F. Child Support**

Sheila Blakney indicated that the Public Defender’s Office provides forms to offenders.

### **G. Child Care**

Penny Marshall noted that there used to be a section at the University of Michigan’s Law Clinic that offered referrals to Child Care. Sheila Blakney said that Protective Services should be taken out and placed in Legal. Department of Human Services may have funds for this issue. Members identified the gap as what inmates should do to locate and pay for child care.

Discussion ensued on the circumstances when guardianship is initiated by the state if an offender is incarcerated. Department of Corrections can take away children if they are incarcerated for two years. Sheila Blakney said that offenders are not informed about this fact, unless a family court attorney informs them. Nothing happens unless Protective Services goes through the court process to terminate child custody. Guardianship is another process for care of child. Rick Visel said that there is an informal process for guardianship through a power of attorney. Steve Hiller said that Protective Services will not be terminating guardianship unless other issues are involved. Diane Davidson advised that assistance with guardianship is a gap to be filled in the “legal” category. Members agreed not to include this as a gap because it is not connected with inmate reintegration.

### **H. Benefits**

Barbara Levin Bergman reiterated that she will contact Bill Birdsall regarding benefits. Delphia Simpson and Rick Visel reported they have been unable to receive any follow-up from Legal Services of South Central Michigan (LSSCM). Delphia Simpson will be contacting a representative from LSSCM. Sheila Blakney added that Veterans Services offers benefits services.

### **I. Clothing/Furniture/Household Goods**

Members contributed the following resources: Ann Arbor Community Center, Parent Teacher Workshop (on State Street), Howe by side of road, Ann Arbor Kiwanis, Friends in Deed.

### **J. Transportation**

Steve Hiller said that the Ann Arbor Kiwanis sells affordable bicycles.

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### **K. Shelter**

Ruth Shabazz clarified that “Shelter Association of Ann Arbor County” should replace “Homeless Shelter”. She noted that warming centers are open in winter. Rotating Centers are also available in conjunction with faith-based communities. Diane Davidson said that there is more transitional housing for those persons receiving substance abuse treatment. In terms of gaps, if a person is intoxicated over .10 or too high on drugs, out of the cold services for those actively using substances, including those acting out in social situations, will be limited.

Discussion ensued on the gap presented by the YMCA’s reopening of its rooms, but will limit accessibility to lower income transient populations. As a result, the county has lost about 100 rooms. 50-60% of renters using the YMCA have mental health issues and will not be able to return and rent housing. Members also identified the following gaps: transitional Housing for persons with co-occurring disorders, for families, limited section 8 vouchers, someone who has a felony conviction becomes ineligible for public housing. An additional resource is the Center for Independent Living.

Members agreed that the other categories have been discussed previously. Scott Patton members can e-mail him if more items need to be added to the gap analysis.

### **IV. Next Steps**

Scott Patton will draft a document that will detail discussions and talk about recommendations to the CJCC. Scott Patton said that the document presented to the CJCC. The full council will then consider if they will require the group to keep on meeting.

Barbara Levin Bergman said that these issues remain outstanding and advised that the committee not disband. Scott Patton noted that the CJCC authorized the group to make recommendations on inmate reintegration, but it cannot address housing issues. Diane Davidson said that in some communities, the Department of Corrections provides step-down housing. The committee could make a recommendation for what is needed and what measures lower recidivism.

Barbara Levin Bergman said that the MPRI should be studied carefully to see what ensues. However, she advised that the group should not keep on meeting just to meet. It should watch that there is no duplication of efforts as the focus of the MPRI is on the prison population, not the jail.

Sheila Blakney said that there is close connection between the two initiatives, and members should consider that the initiatives given at committee are not going to happen. She indicated that some of these gaps will be filled, for example, through mental health services. Diane Davidson acknowledged that value of the committee is offering linkages between two different agencies that would not have necessarily talked if not through the meetings. Therefore in this regard the purpose of the committee is served. If money becomes available, then the county can allocate these funds for both public and private agencies.

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