

Criminal Justice Collaborative Council (Inmate Reintegration Subcommittee)

Meeting Minutes

April 08, 2005

Annex First Floor Conference Room

Ann Arbor, MI

1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Members Present: Scott Patton (CJCC Staff), Michael Echlin (22nd Circuit Court Probation), Ruth Shabazz (Shelter Association of Washtenaw County), Ruby Smith (ETCS Community Programs), Barbara Levin Bergman (Community Corrections Board Advisory Chair), Deb Pippins (Supervisor Project Outreach, CSTS), Diane Davidson (Director of Development/Finance, Washtenaw Housing Alliance)

Convened: 1:00 p.m.

I. Updating Members of Activities at State Level

Scott Patton reported on two discussed at a state-level conference attended by Julie Chaffee (representing Community Corrections) and Kirk Filsinger (representing the Sheriff's Department). The morning session dealing with jail inmate reintegration examined best practices in Macomb, Kent, Kalamazoo counties, on effective strategies for getting inmates reintegrated back into the community.

Scott Patton noted that the state had released a report, currently posted on the CJCC website, related to jail and prison overcrowding two weeks earlier. He noted that the report was sufficiently vague on some of the thirty recommendations (e.g. lack of clarity in words, such as "encourage probation to ..."), as well as specific desired outcomes. However, the report gave some direction regarding the outlook from the state level.

Scott Patton indicated that representatives achieved a consensus on counties working together using the report's recommendations as general blueprint. State representatives said that the state would like to fund some of these recommendations, but whether the state would be able to fund these at this point remains to be seen.

Scott Patton also reported that prisoner re-entry was discussed at the afternoon session. The state is making a concerted effort to ensure that prisoners who are released on parole are less likely to re-offend. This is accomplished with programs that would enable prisoners with the proper skills, tools, and resources.

Diane Davidson noted that a lot of statistical information given at the session was already part of the knowledge base in Washtenaw County. Information was given on the JET program, which identified funding for six identified counties to do prisoner re-entry activities and the process for getting these funds. While Washtenaw County is currently listed as part of this program, she advised that members had to be proactive in letting state representatives know of the county's interest in participating in the pilot program, and following up with next steps, such as the hiring of a community coordinator.

While state representative acknowledged local level requests for reintegration program funding for jail returnees, Diane Davidson clarified that the program funding was mainly for prisoner returnees. However, she was encouraged by Washtenaw County's inclusion in the list of counties to be funded in 2006. Mike Echlin and Ruby Smith indicated that they were not aware of the details of the program or involvement of their departments. Mike Echlin confirmed that two-hour

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trainings will be conducted by the state's Department of Corrections for local corrections agents, which will implement a standard model used elsewhere.

Scott Patton added that Washtenaw County would participate as a second-tier model since the state had already implemented their program in several other counties. In this sixty-day program, Diane Davidson also noted that prisoners have been moved into their home area and received support with housing, employment and other reintegration issues.

Discussion ensued on how best to facilitate processing of state identification documents while the offender is still in prison, so that upon release they could transition easier back into their communities. Diane Davidson reiterated the need for greater discussion on issues that will arise with prisoner reintegration, such as identification document processing. She hoped that the first round of discussions would elicit enough input to push the issue back to whoever will be responsible at the state level with suggestions for improving the reintegration process.

Ruth Shabazz indicated that the issue of restarting entitlements after the prisoner is released must look at both in-reach and out-reach strategies. Barbara Levin Bergman said that whatever in-reach strategies are designed by the state and the present group, it must start within our own jail. While housing may not necessarily be guaranteed, the county could start with entitlement reinstatement or collaboration with the Secretary of State. She hoped to get some mentoring volunteers into the jail, following the Kent County model which has been achieving success.

Scott Patton said that the Community Coordinator position would be responsible for integrating governmental departments responsible for job placement, social services, and entitlement restart. In addition to providing the "big picture" view of the process, this person would interface with relevant agencies, such as Michigan Works. Currently, the state has not clarified who would manage these responsibilities and to which agency this person would report. As a best guess, Scott Patton speculated that the person might have a social worker profile, who would also report to Parole or Probation. Barbara Levin Bergman advised that the person should not be placed as part of the Department of Corrections.

II. Funding Opportunities

Ruth Shabazz reported on the Technical Assistance and Policy Analysis (TAPA) Center for Jail Diversion conference in East Lansing, titled "Successfully Working with Adults with Mental Disorders Involved in the Criminal Justice System." She indicated that the center is coordinating twenty jail diversion programs for inmates with mental health needs around the country, none currently located in Michigan. Six additional programs are under consideration.

Ruth Shabazz added that applications for these Targeted Expansion Jail Diversion grants are being accepted till May 25, 2005. She said with a strong proposal, Washtenaw County may have a chance to get funding through this federal grant. While she was unclear on how much money is available, she noted that these tend to be large grants. She suggested strategies that emphasized in-reach versus outreach, defining the organization as people-changing versus a people-processing, etc. Even if the county does not receive the grant, the organization still offers free consultation services and publications on jail diversion, which she circulated among members.

Deb Pippins will forward the materials to Donna Sabourin to initiate the application process. Scott Patton offered to submit the proposal after it is completed. Barbara Levin Bergman advised that the CJCC be kept informed of this process at their next meeting.

III. Elect Chair

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The motion to have Barbara Levin Bergman serve as temporary chair of the Inmate Reintegration Subcommittee until the next meeting was made by Diane Davidson, supported by and approved unanimously by members.

Adjourned : 1:45 p.m.

Next Inmate Reintegration Subcommittee meeting will be on 4/14/05, **12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.**, at 220 N. Main, Lower Level Conference Room.