

# **CJCC Inmate Reintegration Committee**

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## **Inmate Reintegration Committee Meeting Minutes**

November 9, 2005

Annex, First Floor Conference Room

Ann Arbor, MI

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Mike Echlin, Barbara Levin Bergman, George Siasoco, Diane Davidson, Kirk Filsinger, Rick Visel, Penny Ryder, Delphia Simpson, Ruby Smith

**Meeting called to order at 12:35 p.m.**

### **I. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

Barbara Levin Bergman asked members to review the minutes from the October 5, 2005 meeting. Mike Echlin moved, Julie Chaffee seconded and members approved the previous meeting minutes.

### **II. Gap Analysis Chart**

#### **A. Medical Follow-up/Mental Health Services (Case Management, Psychiatry, Medication)**

Diane Davidson referred members to the gap in services which she added for this item. She indicated that in discussions with Probation Department staff, there was difficulty in getting assessments because of the issue of who will pay for it. She added that offenders with mental health and/or substance abuse issues, but are not “persistent” conditions, do not qualify for assessment, and are thus ineligible for necessary services. Barbara Levin Bergman advised reaching out to community agencies, which may be able to accept and provide these individuals with counseling services. These agencies, such as the Women’s Center of America, can perform the assessment since the county cannot provide this service due to lack of funding. The question is how the county could offer incentives for these agencies to perform these assessments, and cater to individuals who do not pass the screening but still are noticeably in need.

Discussion ensued on where the assessment component should reside as Corrections overlaps with services within the community and partnerships opportunities arise. Diane Davidson suggested that the Probation office staff should be the ones to ask offenders what their needs are. Julie Chaffee agreed in the gap in service. However, she indicated that the jail should be responsible for the assessment while the inmates are incarcerated. Julie Chaffee said that currently the inmates are only connected with mental health services if they proved to be a danger to themselves. Diane Davidson said that Mental Health Services and Corrections staff should be looking at this issue together.

Rick Visel clarified that assessment screening is not currently performed because Corrections staff does not have the tools and resources to do the assessment piece at the jail. He may have counselors but they are not qualified. He may have a psychiatrist to come in every two weeks but they do not perform the assessment piece themselves. He added that assessment for mental health needs is not a formalized process as it is voluntary or if serious mental health needs occur during incarceration. CSTS has a grant to do assessments in the jail, but there is no support (counseling) system or services to assist them. If someone is assessed and needs medication, then the inmate will see the psychiatrist but CSTS does not have to treat anyone in jail. One of the mental health counselor positions has been eliminated as well.

Barbara Levin Bergman advised that the kinds of mental health services for inmates should be clearly listed as a gap. She and Diane Davidson as community leaders will also need to study how this can be addressed at higher levels of policy making, in collaboration with jail staff. If funds

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for inmate reintegration become available, the committee may study some different avenues. The public safety and justice millage did not include a jail assessment component. Delphia Simpson clarified that the “Legal Resource Center” should not be listed as an existing community resource in the Medical Follow Up and Health Services column.

### **B. Employment**

Ruby Smith said that a barrier is transportation funds to get former inmates to and from the work site for job interviews. Michigan Works can only assist with complimentary six bus tickets for job searches. Discussion ensued on employing another resource person from Michigan Works to talk to inmates at the jail. Currently Ruby Smith has limited resources and ability to accomplish this. However, she can forward materials, such as a video series and handouts on employment strategies, to Rick Visel so that he can give these to the inmates. Diane Davidson suggested that Ruby Smith can train someone at Michigan Works and the jail can pay for this staff person. The other avenue is to go to ETCS to fund a partial FTE, or whatever Julie Chaffee is not paying for (20%, one day a week). Rick Visel is open to using any resources.

Diane Davidson will collaborate with Ruby Smith first to clarify the details before she approaches Workforce Development. An employee may already be available to assist in Ruby Smith’s outreach work with inmates. Barbara Levin Bergman said she would review the Board of Commissioners (BOC) decisions on staffing at Workforce Development. Julie Chaffee said that another source of funding is a grant, but the issue is who will write the grant. A few thousand dollars a year is available for these services, which can serve as grant seed money to demonstrate the program’s viability.

### **C. Substance Abuse (Treatment)**

Diane Davidson said that one of the major gaps for substance abuse individuals coming out of the jail is more transitional housing programs with a sober environment. Julie Chaffee indicated that without sanctions, former inmates are free to live wherever they want. Short-term release offenders are not off their substance of choice long enough during incarceration to enter such housing programs after release without a court order. Julie Chaffee advised that this be identified as a gap and refer this policy level discussion to the CJCC or the judiciary so they can develop the proper incentives for recent inmates to enter substance abuse treatment programs, such as shorter jail terms through earned release, or assignment to the new Probation Residential Center (PRC).

Diane Davidson indicated that the committee could provide evidence-based information about the appropriateness of court-ordered housing program treatment. It starts at the very basic entry level, and as they move through their recovery, the housing may vary. It is possible that the judiciary is not aware of the effectiveness of this type of treatment. Julie Chaffee said that Community Corrections has to do an assessment on all inmates that enter her programs. That information goes to the circuit court bench and possibly pre-sentence investigations.

Discussion ensued on whether the issue should be referred formally to the CJCC for discussion and resolution. Barbara Levin Bergman advised that Julie Chaffee address the problem on a less formal basis, rather than a formal call to the CJCC or the judicial bench. The judiciary may be more receptive in a non-public setting. Delphia Simpson clarified that the CJCC should be informed of these issues. Barbara Levin Bergman said this could very well happen in the future, but the committee should allow Julie Chaffee to pursue a more informal diplomatic process. As an example, Rick Visel noted that the tethering program was used by the judges after being informed informally with data and presentations that the program works. The judges were more convinced of its effectiveness and now more likely to employ it in judicial decisions.

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### **D. Benefits**

Rick Visel said that he contacted a representative from Legal Services on whether they could do some workshops on Benefits. He is waiting for them to return his call.

Barbara Levin Bergman will approach Mike Freed of the Dispute Resolution Center to see if volunteer attorneys are available to offer services on alternatives to disputes, how inmates may settle disputes when they are released, what opportunities are available if a former inmate has a dispute, and legal life skills. If the landlord is unfair, the best thing is to not approach violence. Some other legal services may provide an alternative strategy.

Diane Davidson said that John Loring may be a good resource to refer a person who would be available for benefits workshops in the jail. She advised Rick Visel to contact him. Neighborhood senior services may also be contacted. Delphia Simpson said law students may do internships as a source of training resources. Barbara Levin Bergman will call Bill Birdsall, an emeritus professor of University of Michigan School of Social Work, to help come around to volunteer and talk about benefits at the jail. The committee can ask John Loring if he can perform trainings.

### **E. Income**

“Income” category will be removed since the needs are already addressed in other categories.

### **F. Education**

Mike Echlin said that some type of program is available from local schools for GED. Funding for GED is cut everywhere. Rick Visel will ask his GED instructor about these resources. Mike Echlin said that the GED costs 50 dollars a test, and there are 5 tests. The state can court order the GED test, but the offenders cannot pay for it.

### **G. Legal**

This will be tabled for next month as it will be a bigger legal discussion. The committee will begin with this item on next month’s agenda.

### **H. Child Care**

Delphia Simpson said that the child care/support forms need to be filled at Friend of the Court. They have some workers reduce their share of child support when in jail. The welfare check may not reflect the fact that the fathers are in jail. The gap is the lack of knowledge for the offenders in jail on what they should do in these terms. Rick Visel said that they need to include information on these forms in the orientation for inmates. Diane Davidson advised that some of the identified gaps may generate a check list of information that the inmate could be given at orientation. Mike Echlin said that it may be more beneficial to focus on the mentoring phase as the time to deliver the information, so as not to overwhelm offenders in the initial orientation.

### **I. Mentoring**

Diane Davidson advised putting under “gaps to be filled”: creating a list of key questions a mentor would ask an offender to answer. Julie Chaffee said that the MPRI volunteers within faith-based communities which are trained by the state can be utilized as a resource.

### **III. Committee Termination**

Discussion ensued on the possibility of terminating committee meetings. Diane Davidson advised continuing meetings as a forum for helping to focus and crystallize resources for local jail inmate reintegration efforts, improve input to the judiciary, and help to reduce recidivism. Julie Chaffee said that this committee had some value in helping the offenders.

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Barbara Levin Bergman said that the committee could consider stretching out the term of the committee at next month's meeting. Kirk Filsinger asked who would oversee the initiatives discussed at the committee with regards to local jail inmate reintegration. Barbara Levin Bergman said that it does not have to be a formal central committee. Members can discuss resource or policy issues with each other and then various stakeholders will return to their respective boards or with county administration to bring up these issues. The committee will operate independently as the need arises. Rick Visel said that it would be important at least meet regularly in order to ensure that members will follow up on their assigned tasks and reporting to the committee.

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