

GOVERNOR'S RE-ENTRY COUNCIL

AUGUST 27, 2008
LABOR AND INDUSTRIES BUILDING

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

Council Members: Todd Anderson, Rep. Kevin Cameron, Ron Chase, Bruce Goldberg, Ginger Martin, Thomas McClellan, Victor Merced, Bobby Mink, Jerry Moore, Joe O'Leary, Steven Powers, Camille Preus, Mark Royal, Ross Shepard, Laurie Warner, Max Williams, Jim Willis

Steering Committee Members: Walt Beglau, Martin Burrows, Val Conley, Pegge McGuire, Nancy Sellers, Cindy Booth, Heidi Steward, Mark Cadotte, Patrick Vance

Interested Observers: Patty Katz, Paul Solomon, Colette S. Peters, Chane Griggs, Sharon Darcey, Douglas Cooper, Anne O'Malley, Trish Jordan, Cindy Stadel, Janet Carlson, Sharon Shannon, Troy Clausen, Mark Hofer, Paul Billeci, Sue McGuire-Thompson

Max Williams: Welcome and Introductions

Max Williams: Announcements and Information Sharing

Second Chance Act

Mr. Williams asked Ms. Martin to brief the group on the latest information on the Second Chance Act grants available.

Ms Martin distributed a copy of a document by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) on Legislation in Brief; Second Chance Act of 2007: Community Safety through Recidivism Prevention. (Attached) The criteria for applying is not expected to be made public until late fall.

Mr. Williams explained that his goal is to approach this process with an effort to make coordinated decisions about the council's approach on the grant funds. He is confident that the more collaboration we demonstrate, the higher the likelihood that we will qualify for some portion of the grant money for the re-entry demonstration programs. Mr. Williams sees the council as the group to decide into which areas we want to put the money and our efforts. As the workgroups meet, he is hopeful the areas mentioned above will be discussed and ideas for developing a demonstration project and grant opportunities can be brought to the council for further evaluation.

Victor Merced asked if the DOC has priorities that would help the other agencies strategize. Mr. Williams believes the DOC's priorities are not and should not be the focus of the council's work. The council was established to resolve all the major issues

involved in re-entry. Any 2nd Chance Act grant proposals should have the seal of approval of the Re-entry Council as the legislative authority is requested for the grant applications.

Agency Updates

Jim Willis, Director, Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) reported that since February 2008, the DVA has sent out just under 1,000 letters, to the self-reported veterans who are incarcerated in the state system in Oregon. The number of veterans incarcerated in Oregon reflects almost exactly the same percentage of veterans in the general population of Oregon. Veterans' Affairs staff members are making contact with incarcerated veterans about one year prior to release. Most veterans will be eligible for health care benefits once released. DVA can assist incarcerated veterans apply for benefits for their families. The VA assists the veterans with re-entry. Mr. Williams thanked Mr. Willis, saying the DVA has been a good partner. Mr. Williams said he has received a number of e-mails from DOC staff members who have expressed having a good experience working with DVA staff and said DOC appreciates their efforts.

Mark Royal, representing Oregon Associations of Community Corrections Directors (OACCD) reported that support for the new Transition Network is very strong. There is some information in the hand-out *Governor's Re-entry Council Transition Activities Update August 2008*. Mr. Royal wants to give the council the OACCD perspective. He said there was some doubt that bringing 36 counties together to collaborate with the Department of Corrections was possible. There have been a large number of participants at the meetings and a good deal of excitement about the possibilities for progress with the Transition Network. Four workgroups have been established to target specific areas of process. It is a real nuts and bolts focused group and the OACCD wanted the council to be aware of the work and interest in the new statewide Transition Network.

Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) Acting Director, Bobby Mink said that re-entry is as important for juveniles as it is for adults. One of the OYA key performance measures tracks the proportion of kids who release from the close custody system and how long it takes them to become 'positively engaged', meaning: enrolled in school or employed. Currently that is 69%. In order to increase the percentage, OYA entered into a partnership with the University of Oregon, the Oregon Department of Education and the Workforce Investment Board, which is part of the US Department of Education Project Stay Out. This project is for juveniles who are going directly home following release rather than going to a transition program. It offers transition specialists to assist OYA parole staff to assure the kids are linked back to the school system, which can have a number of barriers for these juveniles. This is a 4-year grant through the US Department of Education and they are excited to make progress with this extra effort.

Joe O'Leary, Governor's Senior Policy Advisor for Public Safety said that someone has to report the bad news and today that is his task. Mr. O'Leary reported that the overall state budget is showing a \$400 million shortfall. Revenue has not kept pace with expectations. Add to that, the loss of the county timber payments and the 3 ballot measures with high costs and the budget could be further impacted. Mr. O'Leary said he has been told by budget analysts that \$400 million can be managed to some extent, but if all of the other negative forces come into play, deep cuts will result.

Mr. Williams said all the agency heads are aware of the budget challenges as they are working through the budget building process for the next biennium and are planning in anticipation of the downturn. All the more reason to make the argument that working together the focus is collective progress without new resources, such as solving the drivers' license issue; getting veterans in touch with the DVA and doing better reach-in on the educational opportunities through community colleges.

Victor Merced, Director for the Department of Housing and Community Services said that his department is sponsoring an annual conference in October, which will have a session on special populations in which the re-entry issues will be discussed.

Camille Preus, Commissioner of the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development reported that Max Williams attended a meeting of the community college presidents earlier in the summer and there was a lively discussion about how a rather disaggregate system of 17 independent colleges could work more cohesively, at least in the 5 communities with correctional institutions. There was a follow-up meeting at the DOC central office at which next steps were identified for how a common curriculum can be offered.

Review Meeting Minutes:

The minutes from the February 27th meeting had been sent via e-mail to the council members. No one had responded with edits or corrections and none were offered today. Minutes adopted as written.

Time for Public Input:

Mr. Williams invited those who had signed the public comments sign-in sheet to address the council. The first was Mark Hofer.

Mark Hofer, a self-described felon for 20 years, spoke about the changes he has made in his life through a number of drug treatment programs. He has graduated from Western Oregon University with a degree in psychology and is currently studying for his Masters Degree. He has found it impossible to find a job in his field of study because of his criminal background. Mr. Hofer believes the practice of not hiring felons is discriminatory and asked that the council address the issue through changes in the law by making convicted felons a protected class.

Mr. Williams thanked Mr. Hofer for sharing his experience with the council and said that felons finding employment is an issue that the council has discussed at length and the employment workgroup is addressing. There is a need to increase the number of "felon-friendly" employers and to review the current Oregon laws to identify those that can be changed to allow for greater employability of offenders. Some laws restrict the workforce by requiring certification or licensing for which a felony would be a disqualifier. This group will be reviewing the workgroup's recommendations and where laws are identified that can be changed to increase the number of job possibilities for felons, those laws will be brought to the council for review.

Mr. Hofer said he had one other issue, if he could speak again. Mr. Hofer said he had sent a job proposal, a survey, to Ginger Martin that he had written to be distributed to employers across the State of Oregon and was interested to know if Ms. Martin had received it and what the response of the council is to this survey. Ms. Martin had shared the survey with Mr. Williams, who recommended it be forwarded to the Employment Workgroup for consideration. Mr. Williams said it has not yet been presented to the council.

Mr. Williams then recognized Trish Jordan and extended the opportunity to speak. Ms. Jordan is Program Coordinator for Red Lodge Transition Services. Ms. Jordan has been working with women in prison for 8 years and working in transition for 2 years. She outlined a number of issues facing women offenders. Housing is a major barrier especially for those who were homeless prior to incarceration. An address is essential to get a job, but it is difficult to obtain housing without a job. The Sponsors, Inc. model is a good one that should be duplicated. Ms. Jordan said it is less expensive to house someone in the community than to house them in prison. Not having official state issued identification is also a huge barrier. Ms. Jordan said there is another state with a program that takes a portable ID machine into the prison to create identification cards to provide to the offenders at release.

Mr. Williams recognized Sharon Shannon. Ms. Shannon said she agrees with Ms. Jordan's observations. Ms. Shannon has a son who has been incarcerated at the Clackamas County Jail and while he was there, she saw several things about which she was concerned. She said she doubts that much has changed in the intervening years. She said she agreed with what Mr. Hofer had said about finding employment with a felony on your record, even after completing a degree. Ms. Shannon said that based on previous experience, she recommends working to develop mid to upper level jobs rather than entry level jobs and wanted the council to consider this idea in their recommendations.

Mr. Hofer asked for an additional opportunity to speak, which Mr. Williams granted. Mr. Hofer asked about federal money to create fidelity bonds for offenders. Mr. Burrows explained that the federal program is still available. The problem with it is that the government requires a business to apply for the fidelity bond only after the employer is denied a bond by a regular bonding company. The bonding company would not often deny the bond, but simply raise the price of the bond. The employer could not afford the high price or meet the criteria for the fidelity bond. Mr. Burrows said the Employment Workgroup is looking into this program to see if the rules have changed and if it could be more useful now.

Doug Cooper asked if someone could speak to the Department of Justice Grant (Prison Re-entry Initiative) and Cindy Booth volunteered. Ms. Booth said in 2006, DOC applied for and received a grant through the US Department of Justice Prison Re-entry Initiative. SE Works in Portland, Oregon received a companion grant from the US Department of Labor. The goal is to provide focused transition services, pre-release to offenders who qualify and are releasing to Multnomah and Clackamas Counties. The reach-in pre-release and post-release services, specific to those inmates, are provided by SE Works. Through the US Department of Labor's funding, SE Works has been doing very well; compared to the other 29 locations in the United States, SE Works ranks 2nd.

There was a brief discussion about Oregon being granted \$450,000 in a PRI grant, which DOC applied for in 2007, but for which the DOC project did not qualify because the requirements for the grant were changed after our proposal was submitted.

Mr. Williams said he wanted to bring to everyone's attention the member list of the four workgroups for the Steering Committee and asked the Council members to review it. He said he was impressed by the variety of occupations and agencies represented on the workgroups and personally thanked all of the people for volunteering for the project.

Progress Report: Improvements to Re-entry

Ms. Martin said she thought it would be helpful to the Council to try to capture the many improvements to re-entry in Oregon, some of which the Council is involved in and some not. People throughout Oregon are interested in re-entry and many in other agencies are working to improve their practices. If there is a practice or program you are aware of that is not included, please let Ms. Martin know and she will update her list, which is attached.

Marion County Re-entry Program

Mr. Williams said Marion County was asked to speak to the Council to get a county-level perspective on re-entry. Troy Clausen said he represents the Oregon Association of Community Corrections Directors and that all 36 counties are facing re-entry issues. Mr. Clausen said the issues brought forward by the 3 people during the public comment segment are all issues the Marion County Re-entry Program is working to resolve. With 700 to 800 felony releases per year, Marion County is aware of the needed housing, drug and alcohol treatment, employment, mental health services and others that these releases bring to the county.

Marion County began their true re-entry efforts in 2004. Currently, the Marion County Re-entry Initiative focuses on all of the transition issues. It is a partnership with many different entities including, but not limited to Oregon Department of Corrections, St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Community Services, Chemeketa Community College, Bridgeway, Salem Economic Development Corporation, Road to Recovery, many churches and others. The group created a Housing Initiative, an Employment Initiative, a Marketing and Communications Plan and Outcome Measurements.

Prior to the initiative, a reach-in at 90 days before release from DOC was the practice. Consideration is being given to begin the reach-in at 180 days prior to release and focus on a criminogenic assessment and a motivational assessment; thereby knowing where the individual is in their thinking process, what job skills they bring with them. A review of their resumé and their risk to recidivate will enable mentors to advocate for the offender and employers can be sold on what the person brings to the job.

SEDCOR which works with different consortia to bring industries to Marion, Polk and Yamhill Counties has developed a presentation for employers. Oregon Corrections Enterprises printed the brochure provided to the businesses during presentations. Marion County is working with the employers to refine the presentation.

Marion County Board of Commissioners approved in the last budget cycle, a position in the Community Corrections Division for an employment developer to build relationships with employers.

Commissioner Carlson said that Marion County has run into challenges with housing. One issue being addressed is people who qualify for housing vouchers not getting vouchers. The Marion County Re-entry Initiative is notifying landlords that they can provide potential tenants with vouchers.

Report from the Workgroups: First Priorities

Employment

Housing

Continuity of Health and Mental Health Care

Transition Centers

Ms. Martin explained the Workgroup Progress Report (attached). Ms. Martin said all of the workgroups are in the midst of their work; this is a work in progress. She reminded the Council that these are the first priorities the Council decided to have addressed. There are nearly 100 people from many different occupations, education and training. Only ¼ of them are from Corrections, so they are broad-based and multi-expert. Ms. Martin said she summarized the work of all 4 workgroups in the document.

Ms. Martin she would like to give each of the workgroup convenors a chance to talk about their work. She asked Martin Burrows from the Employment Workgroup to begin.

Mr. Burrows, Steering Committee member and Employment Workgroup convenor said they have a large, diverse group. They have held 3 meetings and they have a lot more work to do. Most of the issues they have identified will not cost money to do. One of the issues that often presents a barrier to the offender are the requirements to report to their parole officer during the time they are supposed to be working, which impacts the employer and the employee. This can be addressed without additional resources. Another issue is developing a standard way of documenting the job skills and abilities the offenders have learned or demonstrated while incarcerated.

Ms. Martin then asked Pegge McGuire to report on the Housing Workgroup. Ms. McGuire invited Ron Chase, as co-convenor, to inject his perspective if he has anything to add. Ms. McGuire said the Housing Workgroup has the benefit of having a wide variety of members from the housing sector and the advocacy sector with many years of experience and was able to begin quickly identifying barriers and successful and not-so-successful housing models. They identified immediate housing needs (the moment of release) and long-term, such as Section 8. Ms McGuire suggested using education via value-based messaging to create political will within the legislative community, public sector (regarding siting issues) and landlords who may be interested in renting to offenders if they understand they are our brothers, our sisters, our nieces and nephews, not just anonymous strangers coming into our neighborhoods.

Mr. Williams asked if the current downturn in the housing market has impacted the housing programs. Mr. Chase said his program is always competing with students for housing in Eugene and he hasn't noticed a decrease in the number of available rental units. Mr. Merced said his agency is just beginning to see "rental creep", which the banking industry warned him about 6 months ago. Mr. Williams said he appreciated

inclusion of the geriatric and special needs population in the discussion because the inmate population in the 55 and older age bracket over the past 5 years has almost doubled and most will release and with fairly significant health issues.

Mr. Williams next asked Patrick Vance, Convenor for the Continuity of Care Workgroup to begin. They have had 3 meetings plus one meeting with the CEPP facilitator. They identified the barriers that releasing offenders met on re-entry.

In the community there are:

- loosely linked health care providers
- charity affiliated organizations
- church affiliated organizations
- county programs (vary widely by county)

There is inadequate accessibility to health care providers. There are not enough people in Oregon to provide adequate health care for all Oregonians, even if they all had good insurance. There is a lack of funding for government programs, i.e. OHP – Standard or other kinds of care. Some state, local and private resources don't view this population as a high priority.

There is a lack of knowledge of evidence-based practices. We are scouring the literature and the internet, as well as the individual associations to which people in the workgroup belong to find models of evidence-based practices that we can adapt to our charter.

Confidentiality laws demand a close look at how to share information to benefit the patient/offender for continuity of health care.

Communities lack the resources to coordinate the programs, care and needs. He said the continuity of care is like a relay race. Success doesn't necessarily depend on the speed of the runner, but the hand-off. We need to establish a firm connection with providers in the community to successfully hand-off care of these offenders at release.

Ross Shepard, Convenor of the One Stop Workgroup said they have been tasked with establishing something that does not exist. The term one stop may be changed and is something the workgroup has discussed. The one stop will be a resource center within each community that will be readily accessible, that would coordinate and develop all of the services needed by those recently released from prison. It would include the following resources:

- Housing
- Employment
- Legal assistance
- Referral for alcohol and drug treatment
- Immediate needs such as food and clothing
- Medical
- Mental health
- The touchstone with the faith-based community

Either the services would be located at the site or referrals would be made for other locations. Initially, implementation statewide was considered; however, that proved to

be too ambitious. Now, success in Lane, Multnomah, Marion and Jackson/Klamath Counties is recommended. The next task is to establish a list of best practices for resource centers. Mr. Shepard said he wanted to make special mention of what is happening in Portland (Multnomah County). He recognized Anne O'Malley and Doug Cooper, who have done a wonderful job bringing together 44 organizations within Multnomah County to provide re-entry services through ROAR.

Mr. Williams thanked Mr. Shepard and asked if there were any questions or comments on the one stop report. Sharon Darcy, Executive Director of Pathfinders said she thought it was really smart to have more than one model and to acknowledge that one size does not fit all.

Legislative Proposals

Mr. Williams said, as most of you know, the department put placeholder legislation in the DOC legislative package in the event that the workgroups recognized a need for legislative change. No issue necessitating legislative change has been brought forward and we were at the point where we needed to fully articulate our intentions for those bills. We withdrew the placeholders knowing that if specific legislative needs arise we have two legislators on the Council, the governor's office support and several other legislators who have expressed interest in several issues on which the workgroups are working to assist in getting legislation crafted and sponsored.

Next Steps

Mr. Williams reminded the council that the next meeting is scheduled for November 19th from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Multnomah County Community Justice Building in Portland. Mr. Williams said that by this next meeting, the 09-11 legislative session will be about a month and a half away and we will know the following key items:

- Budget outlook
- Result of the election on key ballot measures
- Defined workgroups and Steering Committee progress
 - Identify individual tasks
 - Project oriented dates
 - Define what can be accomplished by year's end
 - Identify anticipated needs of 09-11 biennium

Mr. Williams asked Commissioner Carlson to tell the council about the legislative concepts Marion County is moving forward. Ms Carlson said as they were working on the employment issues with Marion County's Re-entry Initiative, the question of how to incentivize employers came up. As they worked, many other employment related issues came up. They researched how other states are addressing re-entry employment issues and eventually came up with 6 legislative concepts. The concepts were discussed by the Employment Workgroup, which provided reaction and input. It is not clear how, by whom and whether or not they will all be introduced. Mr. Williams suggested that Commissioner Carlson provide us with the electronic version of the concepts to be shared with the council members and others.

Mr. Williams directed the Employment Workgroup to review and evaluate the concepts and report recommendations to the steering committee. We will be better prepared by that November 19th date to have a realistic position on what can and cannot be done.

Mr. Williams then invited everyone to visit the upcoming 2008 Oregon State Correctional Institution Fall Transition Fair, which is described on a handout distributed to everyone today. It is an excellent opportunity to observe your agency in action. The fair has been successful for a number of years and we are attempting to replicate the program at our other institutions with the new transition coordinator positions that were funded from the legislature in the last session.

Attachments:



2nd Chance Act
2007 - Legislat...



Work Group
Progress Report.doc.



Transition Activities
Update A...