

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force Joint Behavioral Health Committee and Legal and Justice Systems Committee

Meeting Summary for September 14, 2021

Agenda item links to YouTube video are functional at the time this meeting summary was created, however, YouTube links may change. Links in this document will not be updated. Please refer to the time notation on each agenda item.

1. Call to Order

Raylene King called the meeting to order at 11:33 a.m. The meeting was held via remote-only Zoom Webinar.

Behavioral Health Committee Members Present: Nathan Bajema, Doug Chadwick, Chris Cochran, Arlene Feld, Heather Flaherty, Stephen Gockley, Dan Hammill, Mike Hilley, Byron Manering, Perry Mowery, Mike Parker, Brien Thane

Members Absent: Seth Fleetwood, Michael G. Smith

Legal & Justice Committee Members Present: Bill Elfo, Arlene Feld, David Freeman, Stephen Gockley, Raylene King, Jackie Mitchell, Moonwater, Darlene Peterson, Eric Richey, Donnell Tanksley, Bruce Van Glubt, Maia Vanyo, Kristin Hanna (proxy for Deborah Hawley)

Members Absent: Deborah Hawley, Flo Simon

2. [Domestic Violence Offender Treatment \(00:01:32\)](#)

King introduced Amie Roberts, State Dept. of Social and Health Services, and reported on the Legal and Justice System Committee's work so far on this issue and potential solutions. Concerns about treatment include:

- Programs offered to those unable to afford the state-mandated treatment services
- Lack of state certified domestic violence treatment providers
- Lack of funding for mandated treatment
- Inequity in treatment for those who are unable to afford treatment
- Cultural and ethnic barriers to treatment, including language access
- Victim assistance concerns, including in civil cases
- Temporary housing and financial assistance for offenders and victims
- Recent police reform laws

Potential solutions from the Task Force include:

- Change the WAC to require insurance to cover treatment
- Can they provide scholarships to those going into the treatment field
- Can they incentivize providers to locate in this area
- Make treatment accessible to those who can afford it
- Financial burdens on defendants and their family, who depend on them for support

Roberts presented information on the possibility of requiring insurance companies to cover domestic violence treatment and on working with District Court on a domestic violence treatment provider who may relocate to this area or offer remote treatment in the community.

The committee members discussed:

- Potential new treatment providers
- Recruiting treatment providers and interns to provide experience
- Other jurisdictions that have funding for domestic violence offender treatment programs
- The shortage of treatment providers nationwide
- Incentivize current treatment providers in other areas to set up shop here locally

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- Build the pipeline by investing in a long-term strategy to invest in students who specialize in this type of treatment
- Whether the State standards are successful for effective treatment
- Higher education programs at Western Washington University and Whatcom Community College
- Domestic violence trends locally and nationally
- Impact of losing providers on civil cases, such as protection orders and dissolutions
- Data on the effectiveness of perpetrator treatment
- Impacts from recent police reform laws that may not be protective of victims
- Funding for adequate legal assistance for victims who are going through the civil process
- Ask State representatives to redesign allowable triggers for pursuit
- Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) is reconsidering their work as it has changed due to the recent police reform laws
- The alternate response team non-emergent response model covering the gap between police response and MCOT behavioral health response for calls such as welfare checks, for example
- Plans for expanding the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program
- Connect people to helpful resources that includes housing
- Using ARPA to increase housing opportunities

Next steps could include reaching out to counseling students in the area; developing incentives for counselors to become domestic violence treatment providers; get local students at Western Washington University and Whatcom Community College and also existing behavioral health providers to work on this type of treatment, through financial incentives; ask the State representatives to redefine the allowable triggers for pursuit; supporting the MCOT; moving forward the alternate response team; strategic and targeted housing resources that are paired with programs like LEAD and GRACE and; accessing funding for assisted housing through the Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization.

Richey, Hammill, Vanyo, King, and Chadwick will meet to draft recommendations from the Task Force to State legislators on necessary changes to the State's police reform legislation.

3. [Juvenile Substance Use Disorder \(SUD\) Treatment \(00:52:51\)](#)

Cochran gave a presentation on the role of schools in upstream incarceration prevention, including school priorities, evolution of and changes to school discipline policies and attendance, the use of restorative practices compared with traditional discipline, changes in attendance policies, multi-tiered system of support, the District's resource officer program with the Bellingham Police Department, trauma informed practices, community collaboration to provide services to kids and families, and systemic factors.

The committee members discussed:

- Statistics on the results of the changes, including an increase in students asking for mental health care
- Professional development options for educators in behavioral health and trauma-informed care
- Social and emotional curriculum and educating kids on the impacts to brain function and decision-making, due to the choices they make

4. [Recommendations for American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) funding \(01:17:15\)](#)

Flaherty reported on the draft letter and using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) investment opportunities.

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The committee members discussed:

- Using the Dispute Resolution Center to support the various conversations and prevention efforts they are trying to achieve
- Significant impacts in the coming years on the workforce and the need to invest in partner infrastructure
- Adding nonprofit support as an additional need in the letter
- A gap crisis response and the need for the alternative response team

Parker moved to forward to the full Task Force. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously with the following members present from both committees: Nathan Bajema, Byron Manering, Heather Flaherty, Dan Hammill, Mike Hilley, Doug Chadwick, Chris Cochran, Mike Parker, Brien Thane, Arlene Feld, Stephen Gockley, Bill Elfo, Kristin Hanna, Raylene King, Jackie Mitchell, Moonwater, Perry Mowery, Darlene Peterson, Eric Richey, Donnell Tanksley, Bruce Van Glubt, Maia Vanyo

5. [Behavioral Health Provider Ride-Along with Law Enforcement \(01:29:08\)](#)

Chadwick reported on discussions in the Behavioral Health Committee about alternative responses and the difference in response needs between Bellingham versus rural areas of Whatcom County:

- The County uses MCOT and GRACE to get clinicians out in the field
- They are discussing having a behavioral health clinician ride along with the behavioral health deputies
- Funding may be available
- Safety of all responders is an issue and concern
- Skagit County's Impact Program is a model they are considering
- A ride-along model would work better in the more rural areas
- Legislative changes don't say that law enforcement can't respond, but they have a duty of reasonable care and must use alternatives, and officers must leave the scene if there is no crime or immediate threat

Committee members discussed requesting funding from the Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization.

This item will be held for a presentation at the next Behavioral Health Committee in October.

6. Task Force Communications

This item was held to the next meetings for each committee.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.