

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force

Meeting Summary for November 15, 2021

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1. Call to Order

Task Force Co-Chairs Stephen Gockley called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. The meeting was held remote-only via Zoom Webinar.

Members Present: Barry Buchanan, Arlene Feld, Heather Flaherty, David Freeman, Stephen Gockley, Daniel Hammill, Deborah Hawley, Mike Hilley, Raylene King, Scott Korthuis, Seth Fleetwood, Perry Mowery, Eric Richey, Flo Simon, Bruce Van Glubt, Maia Vanyo, Greg Winter, Doug Chadwick (proxy for Bill Elfo)

Members Absent: Bill Elfo, Jack Hovenier, Byron Manering, Moonwater, Darlene Peterson, Eric Petersen, Dave Reynolds, Tyler Schroeder, Donnell Tanksley

2. [Behavioral Health Provider Ride-Along with Law Enforcement \(00:01:53\)](#)

Doug Chadwick, Undersheriff, spoke about a proposed program to develop a behavioral health provider ride-along with law enforcement:

- There are ongoing safety concerns if law enforcement doesn't respond to the scene
- They've discussed several different behavioral health responder models
- The intent of the recent legislature is to reduce the number of calls that law enforcement responds to
- They would like to develop a program similar to the Impact Program in Skagit County
- Often, information received by dispatchers is incomplete, and the actual on-scene information is different
- It would be quicker for law enforcement to respond in the City of Bellingham alternative response program
- A downside is that a law enforcement officer is present when not needed
- Funding may be available for the program

Task Force members discussed:

- Funding available through the North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization
- Capacity constraints from the behavioral health workforce and possibility of filling those positions
- Working with and staffing for the Skagit County Impact Program
- Available capacity at the Crisis Stabilization Center and the need for a proposed 24/7 mental health urgent care center
- Impact Program statistics, data, and deployment
- Behavioral health response to a substance use disorder (SUD) situation
- Connect a ride-along program with the Ground-level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) Program, including through the Julota case management system
- Upgrading the public safety radio system to enable behavioral health specialists to have their own frequency
- Next steps in developing a program

Hammill moved to recommend to the County Council and County Executive to include a budget item in the biennial or mid-term budget for a co-responder program similar to the Skagit County Impact Program. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously by the members present at the time of the vote: Doug Chadwick, Dan Hammill, Stephen Gockley, Arlene Feld, Raylene King, Perry Mowery, Deborah Hawley, Mike Hilley, Heather Flaherty, Barry Buchanan, Eric Richey, Maia Vanyo, Bruce Van Glubt, Greg Winter, Flo Simon, Scott Korthuis, Seth Fleetwood, and David Freeman.

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3. [State of the Whatcom County Jail \(00:40:45\)](#)

Wendy Jones, Chief of Corrections, referenced her handouts and gave a presentation on how people enter and exit the jail, challenges due to booking restrictions, impacts from the Covid pandemic, and data on average daily population, booking, releases, and average length of stay.

Task Force members discussed the increased number of competency orders; mental health providers in the jail; dismissing cases without prejudice through a civil flip to allow offenders to be sent to Western State Hospital for treatment; the length of time to get a competency evaluation while in custody; the difficulty of getting inmates to accept the medication they need and keeping them stabilized; using technology to alleviate the problem for public defenders who cannot meet confidentially with their clients during Covid outbreaks and restrictions; understanding that the jail is a point of engagement to get offenders treated medically and connected to services in the community; the need to replace the current jail facility with something that allows people with a behavioral health issue to be treated in a more humane location; the court backlog; transitioning people from services available while on probation to community services, and; the need for pretrial and reentry navigators.

4. **Committee Updates**

This item was not discussed.

5. **Other Business**

There was no other business.

6. **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

7. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.