

WASHTENAW COUNTY

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL

Inmate Reintegration Committee

DRAFT Report

Note: Content gaps and corrections need to be completed through committee work.

**Washtenaw County:
A Just and Safe Community**

INMATE REINTEGRATION COMMITTEE REPORT

I. Charge

The purpose of Inmate Reintegration Committee is as follows:

- To recommend to the CJCC how best to reduce recidivism by identifying and/or removing barriers that prevent offenders from successfully transitioning from judicial supervision to being productive members of society;
- When appropriate, to coordinate with the State Department of Corrections' Prisoner Reentry Initiative;
- To brief the CJCC Steering Committee on committee progress and upon direction of the Steering Committee, to brief the CJCC on committee progress.

II. History

At the November 2004 meeting, the CJCC began discussions on establishing a committee to address inmate reintegration issues. The committee was tasked with defining the scope of the project, timeline, barriers to success, identifying solutions, and bringing information back to the CJCC for initial action.

At the beginning of 2005, the inmate reintegration committee was established with membership determined through CJCC members and their staff members who volunteer to participate. CJCC members also identified employment, homelessness and mental health treatment as key to the success of inmate reintegration and invited additional members to this group. Committee members involved included:

- Barbara Levin Bergman, Commissioner, and Committee Chair
- Scott Patton, CJCC Staff
- Julie M. Chaffee, Director of Community Corrections
- Rick Visel, Director of Inmate Services
- Diane Davidson, Director of Finance and Development, Washtenaw Housing Alliance
- Deb Pippins, PORT and Jail Services Supervisor, CSTS
- Ruth Shabazz, Program Director, Shelter Association of Washtenaw County
- Sheila Blakney, Public Defender
- Delphia Simpson, Public Defender
- Ruby Smith, ETCS
- Mike Echlin, Probation
- Gary Greenfield, Jail Lieutenant
- Kirk Filsinger, Jail Commander
- Penny Ryder, American Friends Service Committee

The committee has met in successive months to identify key issues that may prevent or reduce the likelihood of successful post-jail reintegration. During discussions, five additional efforts were identified that share a common theme:

Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI). The State of Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) has introduced an effort to match prisoners who are eligible for parole with community services, including employment training, substance abuse services, housing, etc. The MPRI is currently grant funded and MDOC is phasing in their effort on a

county by county basis. Washtenaw has been selected to participate in Phase II and has grant funding available beginning February 2006 and ending October 2006. MDOC has indicated that continued funding will be proposed in the State appropriation process. The Inmate Reintegration Committee discussed MPRI at length on several occasions as it appears that while the MPRI and CJCC target populations are different (State prisoners vs. County inmates), the process of matching individuals up with community services is similar. The desired outcome of reducing recidivism is also shared. The Committee concluded that it may be best for the County to work cooperatively with MPRI by sharing information, analyses, and plans but not to attempt to combine the two efforts at this point. The committee also concluded that there are several elements of MPRI that may be appropriate to implement as part of inmate reintegration, including the transition accountability plan, which matches a prisoner's needs with community services prior to release. It is also important to note that several Committee members have chosen to become involved in MPRI and have become members of the MPRI Steering Committee or the MPRI Advisory Committee. Information about MPRI can be found at <http://www.publicpolicy.com/MPRI>.

Inmate Health Service Oversight Team. This group was established in the summer of 2004 to develop a comprehensive approach to the delivery of inmate health care. It has taken significant strides in improving the intake, assessment, and care delivery processes for both mental and physical health while controlling costs for service delivery. It has also sought to continue the delivery of care once an inmate leaves the facility. Specifically, four audiences have been targeted and matched with services:

- Veterans – Washtenaw County Veterans Services now visits the jail on a frequent basis to determine which inmates are eligible for veteran benefits. Those who do are matched up with their eligible benefits.
- Uninsured for physical health – Inmates who lack health insurance and whose income is less than 200% of the federal poverty level are encouraged to enroll in the Washtenaw Health Plan (Plan A or Plan B). This helps ensure that physical health care continues upon discharge from the jail.
- Severe and Persistent Mentally Ill – CSTS, which provides mental health services within the jail, assess whether inmates meet the criteria of the mental health code. Those who do are provided services within jail and a discharge plan is developed and implemented to help ensure that services are received once the inmate is released into the community.
- Inmates with Co-occurring disorders – All CSTS clients are given a discharge plan based on the GAINS Center Best Practices. The APIC model is a set of research-based critical elements designed to guide jail mental health programs through the reentry process in a manner that yields improved outcomes for inmates, especially those with a co-occurring disorder. (Mental health and substance use). The APIC model stands for four basic elements which are essential to successful re-entry: Assess, plan, identify, and coordinate.
- DCH Jail Diversion Grant: A Department of Community Health grant provides for all inmates who are in jail more that 14 days to be assessed for mental illness, substance use, fetal alcohol syndrome, and traumatic brain injury. This grant will provide for a Mental Health Professional to identify clients who may have been missed at initial booking and provide them with referrals to appropriate services while in jail and upon release. It will also provide data to identify gaps in service and provide additional services for pre and post booking services.

Probation Residential Center. A gap in the continuum of sanctioning options is the availability of Probation Residential Center (PRC) beds. A PRC offers a judge the ability to sentence an offender to a non-jail setting in which the offender can earn the privilege of gaining employment while receiving education and therapy during their sentence. The establishment of a PRC has been included in public safety and justice plans for several years. However, funding has not been made available. The committee identified this as an effective strategy to adequately match offenders with community services, employment, and education.

POWER (People, Organized, Working, Evolving, Reaching). A community not-for-profit applied for a grant to assist with matching offenders with community services. Although this grant application was not successful, the committee noted that there are other community groups that are focusing on the recidivism issue and developing relationships with these partners and supporting their work may help ensure that the need is filled.

Jail Inmate Services. Correctional Services staff have used committee conversations to implement two important changes that should assist with overcoming two barriers to successful inmate reintegration:

- Inmate Identification. Rick Visel from the Jail's Correctional Services and Lawrence Kestenbaum have agreed in principle to assisting inmates that are born in Washtenaw County with obtaining a birth certificate so that they can obtain a Michigan State ID or Drivers License. Hopefully within the next two weeks the process for implementing this new initiative will be completed.
- Transitioning Home. One of the other noted needs identified by the Jail Reintegration Committee is providing inmates will a realistic personal discharge from jail plan. To address this, a new workshop was instituted by Jail staff on January 31st called "Transitioning Home." This is a three week class designed to help inmates who will soon be returning to the community. Class subjects discussed include: establishing goals and priorities, finding employment, finance management, housing and integrating this plan into each inmate's responsibilities while on probation.

III. Findings

Sheriff Survey. The committee has met to identify what inmates need to successfully reintegrate into the community, which of these elements are most important, what resources currently exist in the community, how these inmates can be connected to these resources, and which agency is accountable for making these connections. The Sheriff has conducted a survey of inmate (Attachment A) which identified barriers to successful inmate reentry from the inmate's perspective. The survey was distributed to inmates on February 25, 2005 and 177 surveys were completed and analyzed by Sheriff's staff. The primary services that the inmates would like to receive upon release were assistance in job placement, assistance in housing, and assistance in education. The information that they would like to receive prior to release were social services and connections with Alcoholics Anonymous/ Narcotics Anonymous. And the programs that they would like to receive during incarceration to help prepare for a successful release were job/ skills trade training, substance abuse counseling, educational counseling, and computer training. It is also important to note that 88% of inmates who filled out a survey indicated that it is very important for an inmate to leave jail with a picture identification.

Gaps Analysis. Several committee meetings were conducted to identify gaps that an inmate faces upon release that can be barriers to successful reintegration into the community. Members have performed a preliminary gaps analysis of the inmate reintegration system and developed a draft chart which outlines its findings (Attachment B). These discussions were detailed and identified several community resources that many committee members found insightful. No effort was made by the committee to quantify the number or the costs associated with filling each gap. Nonetheless, the gaps analysis is a useful tool to comprehensively identify the issues that inmates face. It will be used by Correctional Services staff to help match inmates with community services as permitted by workload. It also supports findings of other strategic plans and analyses. It is also important to note that the operational model of a Probation Residential Center would help address several of the gaps.

Volunteers/ Mentors. One consistent theme throughout committee discussions was the need for mentors to assist inmates with reintegration. Several other correctional settings have developed mentorship programs – most of which are staffed by volunteers. Two logistical barriers were identified. First, the activity of recruiting and training a group of volunteers is something that would take significant time and energy. Second, to be successful, the mentors would need to target inmates who have had significant stays in jail in order to develop a relationship that could continue upon release. Ninety days or more was discussed but no target was decided. Since these individuals tend to be boarded in other jails due to overcrowding, the logistics associated with matching mentors becomes more complex. The overcrowdings also create an operational priority for Correctional Services staff who would need to be actively involved in supporting a mentorship program.

211. The Gaps Analysis and several committee discussions highlight the need for a well-designed referral network through which an inmate, an individual on probation, Correctional Services staff, an offender's legal representation, or volunteers/ mentors could be able to connect an offender's needs with community resources. The hope from the committee is that 211 would serve as this referral network.

IV. Recommendations for Future

Forward information on to jail staff. This should help to assist them with connecting inmates with services during discharge. While Correctional Services staff have the operational priority of addressing overcrowding, using the Gaps Analysis as a tool to help connect individual needs with community resources may help reduce the recidivism rate.

Forward this report to partnering forums. These include the Human Services Community Collaborative, 211, MPRI, Washtenaw Housing Alliance, Continuum of Care, and other appropriate agencies/ forums. The committee noted that while the targeted population is a criminal justice one, the majority of the gaps identified in the Gaps Analysis are issues that can only be addressed through human services. Several existing forums have established goals that overlap with many of the gaps identified and if they are successful in meeting those goals, it could help with the committee's goal of reducing recidivism.

Confirm the PRC as a partial solution to reintegration issues. The probation residential center (PRC) as proposed would include services to assist an offender with education, employment, substance abuse, and other barriers to successful community reintegration.

The committee, through various meetings, saw this as an important sentencing option that should be made locally available to the judiciary of Washtenaw County.

Have committee members continue to coordinate with MPRI. While the longevity of MPRI has not been determined, the proposed operational model is to match a prisoner with community services – a model that is very consistent with what the committee has tried to address. Since the gaps faced by a prisoner and an inmate are similar (housing, employment, substance abuse, etc.) and the services available in the community are the same providers, coordination is appropriate. The committee did express concerns about this recommendation. Namely, the fact that community resources are limited and even declining in many cases, may cause a situation in which community agencies are asked to continue to provide services at currently levels, while also being asked to provide services to two additional populations – state prisoners and county inmates.

Meet quarterly in 2006. The committee expressed a strong desire to monitor success, revisit issues, and keep one another abreast with changes that may occur. Committee members have developed a productive working relationship that is work retaining.

Establish a subcommittee to develop analysis of volunteer/ mentor program. The committee recognized this issue as a key one to reduce recidivism but acknowledged that there are many logistical and policy-level issues associated with the establishment of such a program. Further analysis of these issues may prove a volunteer/ mentor program to be a feasible solution or not. This issue will be an item that will be discussed at the next committee meeting.