**Reentry Advisory Council (RAC)**

1st Quarter 2017 Meeting Minutes

Department of Corrections Headquarters

Thursday, March 9, 2017

**Attendees Present:**

Secretary James Le Blanc, Dept of Public Safety and Corrections

Assistant Secretary Rhett S. Covington, Dept of Public Safety and Corrections

Chairman Louis Reine, LA-AFL-CIO

Joseph Ardoin, Jr., LA State Building and Construction Trades Council

Kenneth Burrell, Designee for Ava Dejoie, Louisiana Workforce Commission

Bridget Dinvaut, Louisiana District Attorney’s Association

James T. Dixon, Louisiana Public Defender Board

Judge Jules D. Edwards, III, 15th Judicial District Court

Robert D. Hanser, University of Louisiana at Monroe

Jennifer Katzman, Department of Health and Hospitals

Reverend Paul R. Murray, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center

Joseph Prejean, Big Poppas Fitness Gym

Sheryl M Ranatza, Committee on Parole

Dr. Raman Singh, Department of Public Safety and Corrections

Angela Day, designee for Monty Sullivan, Louisiana Community and Technical College System (Telephone Conference)

Nicole Sweazy, Louisiana Housing Corporation

**Absent:**

Courtney L. Baker, Louisiana Association of Business and Industry

Michael ‘Mike’ Cazes, Louisiana Sheriff’s Association

Arthur L. Hunter, Jr., Orleans Criminal District Court

Daniel R. Martiny, LA Senate

Steve Pylant, LA House of Representatives

Marketa Garner Walters, Department of Children and Family Services

**Other:**

Bobby Lee, Probation and Parole

Ernest Stephers, LA-AFL-CIO

Dennis Schrantz, MCCD, Center in Justice Innovation

Shannon Joseph, Louisiana Workforce Commission

Hillar Moore, District Attorney’s Office

**Dept of Public Safety & Corrections Headquarters Staff:**

Natalie LaBorde, DOC Headquarters

Angela Whittaker, DOC Headquarters

Malcolm Myer, DOC Headquarters

Robert Vehock, Office of Offender ReEntry

Gretchen McCarstle, Office of Offender ReEntry

Amanda Mayeux, Office of Offender ReEntry

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Louis Reine at 9:37 am.

Welcome & Introductions were given by Chairman Louis Reine.

Roll was called and a quorum was established.

**Opening Remarks, James M. Le Blanc, Secretary**

Secretary Le Blanc thanked everyone for their hard work.

**JRI Task Force Activities & Recommendations, James M. Le Blanc, Secretary**

* Prison population has hit a historical mark having gone down by 5,000 since 2012 which translates to lots of savings. There were 1,200 less people incarcerated last year alone.
* Louisiana’s main challenge is to reduce the incarceration rate. 50% of those incarcerated are being housed in local jails.
* Secretary Le Blanc then reviewed the 3 subgroups of the JRI Task Force, their goals, general findings, and recommendations.
  + *Budget and Finance*, chaired by Secretary Le Blanc, has one more meeting left which is to be held on March 13th, 2017
    - Goals:
      * Offer guidance regarding reinvestment of savings after the drop in prison population. 50% of the reinvestment should be in regards to local substance abuse programming while the remaining 50% should be used to help fill gaps in Louisiana’s budget.
      * In an effort to reduce recidivism, make financial obligations more affordable by reducing the percentage withheld from offenders’ pay from 64% to 50 % and instituting better “take home” pay for transitional work programs.
    - General Findings:
      * Reinvestment should be into programs in parish jails, grants for reentry coalitions, community supervision, probation and parole, as well as services for crime victims.
  + *Community Corrections*, chaired by Senator Martini - Attention is needed in the community corrections portion of Corrections. 59% of intakes are due to revocations of probation or parole.
    - Goals:
      * Strengthening probation and parole by expanding research-based programs and policies.
      * Smaller caseloads of probation and parole officers.
      * Simplify probation and parole system for officers, victims, supervisees, and officials.
      * The chance of recidivism of an individual that completes probation or parole is approximately 20%. Create incentives for those on supervision to ensure compliance and improve success rates.
    - Key Findings:
      * Louisiana has research-based responses for people on probation and parole but those responses still rely heavily on incarceration.
      * No system-wide framework exists for incentives to keep supervisees compliant. Supervision resources are stretched over long supervision terms.
      * Less people are on probation and more people are going to prison. Statutory eligibility for probation dropped from 58% in 2010 to 49% in 2015.
      * ReEntry resources have grown thanks to DoC changes. Statutory changes can help expand that further.
    - Policy Recommendations:
      * Improve victim registration and notification process.
      * Expand alternatives to incarceration.
      * Streamline parole releases for those who are compliant with case plans and institutional roles.
      * Focus community supervision on the highest risk (first year) by reducing maximum probation terms and establishing earned compliance credit incentives.
      * Address gaps in conditions in probationary sanctions for violations of probation and parole conditions.
      * Address collateral consequences for felony convictions that create barriers into reentry
  + *Sentencing Group,* chaired by Representative Leger
    - Goals:
      * Develop policy recommendations to promote uniformity in sentencing process
      * Protect public safety and hold offenders accountable.
    - Key Findings:
      * Current criminal code is overly confusing.
      * Sentencing lengths have increased for common, non-violent offenses in recent years.
      * Discretionary parole for nonviolent offenses is limited and shrinking
      * Louisiana has seen significant growth in number of inmates with long prison stays
    - Policy Recommendations:
      * Provide greater equality and equity in sentencing by making back-end release mechanism retroactive for those convicted of nonviolent offenses (future possibility of including some violent offenses).
      * Establish another reception center
      * Revise drug penalties which would reserve severe punishment for higher level drug offenses.
      * Consolidate laws on property crimes and raise value for felony charges.
      * Target weapons enhancements on dangerous offenders
      * Reduce the window of time which certain prior crimes would count towards habitual offenders statute.
      * Establish temporary furlough for those with serious medical needs.
      * Expand incentives for inmates who take part in recidivism reduction program.
* Chairman Reine, Secretary Le Blanc, Angela Day, and Assistant Secretary Covington discussed the concerns regarding the technical college system, the future of vocational training and its future with the Department of Corrections. All involved parties are still open to discussions about options for the future to maintain and enhance vocational training opportunities for offenders.
* Natalie LaBorde discussed the 5 policies that received a majority vote within the Justice Reform committee:

1. Opportunity for parole for longer serving inmates
   1. Life Sentence - life means life, no opportunity for geriatric parole - retroactively create geriatric parole after serving 30 years, age of 50
   2. Geriatric Parole for limited class of offenders not serving life - 20 years and age 45
2. Juvenile lifers - no automatic life sentence without parole - retroactively after 30 years any juvenile convicted with life sentence would be eligible to apply for parole
3. Parole eligibility for violent offenders - 55% retroactive parole eligibility
4. Habitual Offender Statute change -  class D and E felonies (low level nonviolent) could not be used as a predicate for habitual offender statute
5. Felon in possession of firearm statute - current mandatory minimum of 10 years - proposed to create spectrum from worst to least, allow judge discretion
6. Allocating cost to local for misdemeanor, low-level crimes - did not receive majority vote

**Previous Meeting Minutes**

* Motion to adopt the December 2016 minutes made by Chairman Reine, seconded by Judge Edwards and Mr. Joseph Ardoin. There were none opposed and the December 2016 minutes were adopted.

**ReEntry EBR D.A.’s Office, Hillar Moore, District Attorney**

* District Attorney Hillar Moore touched briefly on some of the information given by Secretary LeBlanc regarding the JRI recommendations expressing some concerns for their viability and implementation.
* Proposed multi-agency and resource provider  meeting with low-level (burglary, drug offenses to start) offenders to offer help, resource, and services so that they are less likely to return to prison. Proposed developing a mentor for those soon to be released.
* Baton Rouge pilot program idea, put DA, public defender, judge, social worker, and data collector from LSU  in parish prison on Friday. All cases from Friday to Friday that do not bond out find out reason they’re left behind (couldn’t bond out, need mental health, etc) Track them through system, see if they are successful.
* Judge Edwards expressed his concern and compared the program described to the NOLA for Life Program which faced difficulties getting cooperation from the service providers.

**TIGER Update, Rhett Covington, Assistant Secretary**

* Assistant Secretary Covington introduced the PowerPoint for TIGER (see attached)
* Tool will have different user groups. Some will have view access only, create assessments, edit/delete, authorizations and training.
* Hope to have automated prototype by July meeting.
* Parole board has adopted the risk portion in manualized form for use in local jail offender hearings.
* Reports approximately 80% predictive value for general risk of recidivism.
* Judge Edwards posed several questions regarding when/to whom the tool would best be implemented. Pre adjudication or post adjudication? District Attorney, Defense Attorney, Judge? Unsure at this point.
* District Attorney Hillar Moore asked when the complete automated tool would be available. Assistant Secretary Covington stated that by the end of the calendar year the tool should be automated and ready to use.

**LA-PRI Update, Rhett Covington, Assistant Secretary**

* Assistant Secretary Covington described Logic Model and flow chart (see attached) and introduced Dennis Schrantz.
* Mr. Schrantz briefly described the implementation phase of the LA-PRI model. Goal of getting offenders pre-enrolled in services instead of enrolling after release and remaining on a waiting list.
* Main goal: Improve individualized case plans that are driven by actuarial prediction of their risk to commit crime and create additional victims.
* LA-PRI committees will now include community leaders. (see attached State Organizational Structure of the LA-PRI)

**Reentry Council Strategic Planning Revision Draft, Rhett Covington, Asst. Secretary**

* 5-year plan’s year for renewal. Final draft of plan for review should be out in June so that it may be adopted in July.
* Asked for deliverables and feedback from every organization involved.
* Chairman Reine posed questions regarding placement of individuals that have specialized skillsets and pay scales of those individuals as compared to those non-offenders that are in the same field/position. Secretary LeBlanc assured Chairman Reine that offenders across the board that are qualified for the positions they are placed in will be paid a competitive wage comparable to those other individuals that are non-offender employees.

**2017 Meeting Schedule Approval, Louis S. Reine**

* Chairman Reine proposed the idea that the December 21st meeting be moved to December 14th, 2017. There were no objections. The meeting for December will now be held on December 14th, 2017.

**Other Business, Louis S. Reine**

* ReEntry Solutions program in Alexandria, LA - suggest to Assistant Secretary Covington that a representative from ReEntry Solutions come to speak to the Board at a future meeting.
* Question from Mr. Kenneth Burrell regarding the loss of skilled workers who are being trained and then losing that trained employee once they are released.
  + Mr. Ardoin mentioned a parole officer that speaks to specific companies to hire ex-offenders in particular.
  + Secretary LeBlanc mentioned that with the transitional work program after discharge most decide to go home. 40% are offered a position with the job after release but 90% wish to return home.
* Judge Edwards posed a question regarding getting probationers from Lafayette, LA into job development or apprenticeship programs. It was agreed that there would be more discussion on this after the meeting had adjourned.
* Assistant Secretary Covington brought to the attention of the Board the ReEntry Alliance Conference which is in Shreveport, LA on April 25th and 26th, 2017.

There was no other business and no further questions.

Chairman Reine entertained the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ardoin and the meeting was adjourned at 11:49 am.

The next meeting will be held on July 20, 2017 at 9:30 am.