

Reentry Advisory Council (RAC)
2nd Quarter 2021 Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom
Thursday, May 13, 2021

Attendees Present:

Malcolm Myer, Designee for Chairman Louis Reine, LA-AFL-CIO
Camille Conway, Designee for Dr. Monty Sullivan, Louisiana Community and Technical College System
Rhett Covington, Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections
Judge Fred Crifasi, 15th Judicial District Court
Karissa Page, Designee for Jennifer Katzman, Department of Health
Robert D. Hanser, University of Louisiana at Monroe
Judge Arthur L. Hunter Jr., Orleans Criminal District Court
Joseph Prejean, Big Poppas Fitness Gym
Joseph Ardoin, Jr., LA State Building and Construction Trades Council
Bridget Dinvaux, Louisiana District Attorney's Association
Kathleen Carpenter, AL Association of Builders and Contractors
Sheryl Ranatza, Committee on Parole
Stacey Falgout, Designee for Dr. Randy Lavespere, Department of Public Safety and Corrections
Winona Connor, Louisiana Housing Corporation
Ava Dejoie, LA Workforce Commission
Alfreda Tillman Bester, Designee for Marketa Garner Walters, Department of Children and Family Services
Dennis Grimes, Louisiana Sheriff's Association

Absent:

James Le Blanc, Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections
Christian Rhodes, Louisiana Association of Business and Industry
Rémy Voisin Starns, Louisiana Public Defender Board
Reverend Paul R. Murray, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center
Tony Bacala, LA House of Representatives
Troy Carter, LA Senate

Call to Order

- Meeting was called to order by Deputy Secretary, Malcolm Myer at 9:30 am.

Roll Call

- Roll was called and a quorum was established 16 of 22 present

Approval of the February 2021 Meeting Minutes

- Deputy Secretary Malcolm Myer entertained a motion to adopt the February 2021 minutes. A motion to accept the minutes was put forward by Joseph Prejean, second by Arthur Hunter stained with no votes against. The minutes were unanimously adopted.

Welcome and Introductions, Deputy Secretary Malcolm Myer

- Assistant Secretary Covington welcomed everyone and asked that new members introduced themselves.
 - Mr. Flichter Bell who works for Southern University Law Center and also serving as the interim Director of Capital Area Reentry Coalition.
 - Judge Fred Crifasi with the 19th JDC
 - Judge Arthur Hunter

IST Legal Subcommittee Presentation, Amy Duncan, LA State Bar Association

- Ms. Duncan explained that the Legal Subcommittee was started in late 2019 by a group of advocates representing legal service organizations who came together to identify ways civil and criminal legal aid communities can work together to address high priority legal reentry needs. She stated much of this work is being done through Access to Justice/Building Bridges Committee.
- Ms. Duncan stated the IST Legal Subcommittee includes representation from the courts, public defenders, legal aid, private bar, non-legal organizations and several employees from the Department of Corrections. This group is led by the recently retired Judge Jules Edwards in Lafayette and Mark Cunningham with Jones Walker.
- Ms. Duncan states this group set out to identify 3 goals which were to identify the highest priority legal needs that create barriers to reentry, development best practices for legal needs identified and develop communication with the Department of Corrections and the civil and criminal legal aid communities. She announced the Subcommittee has made significant progress on all of these goals.
- Ms. Duncan stated the top two ranked priority legal needs are detainers and child support obligations:
 1. Detainer – The need for Department of Corrections/Preclass Department to receive information from a standardized process/form or both to get detainers/holds from other agencies, jurisdictions and outside agencies on an incarcerated person which effects their release date. She stated Judge Edwards is leading this project. The groups next steps are through a survey analysis with the help of the Legal Subcommittee members and well as the Department of Corrections developed a national survey to collect responses of best practices of other states. Those survey results are in and the group is currently analyzing the results and she stated she should have more to share soon.
 2. Child Support obligations for incarcerated persons - Ms. Duncan was excited to announce that the Child Support suspension law for non-custodial parents went into effect August of 2020. She stated the Department of Corrections and the Department of Child and Family Services are working to identify those eligible for the modifications in accordance with the law. She stated the Building Bridge Committee created a brochure of what the law includes, who is eligible, who is not and what the process to suspend looks like. She gave a special thanks to Rhett Covington and Konitra Jack. This brochure is designed to be used by attorney's, DCFS, Courts, Sheriff's Offices and Officers with the Department of Corrections. Once the brochure is finalized it will be available on the LSBA website.
- Ms. Duncan thanked Department of Corrections for their marketing and awareness campaign on Second Chance month in April and because of that awareness the LASBA hosted a continuing legal education program for attorney's to address reentry for people currently and formerly incarcerated this was also held in conjunction with the opening of the Reentry Legal Clinic that's led by Justice of Accountability Center of Louisiana in partnership with Southeast Louisiana Legal Service and First 72 plus. This clinic takes place the 3rd Wednesday each month in New Orleans at 5:00 pm and is designed to serve formerly incarcerated persons who have served at least 2 months in the last five years. The areas of free advice include child support, driver license, traffic tickets, TWIC applications, evictions and consumer law and public benefits. For more information, visits JACLouisiana.org or contacting Elizabeth Owen.

Pay for Success Grant, Rachel Levy & Danielle Charpentier, Social Finance

- Ms. Levy stated Social Finance is a national nonprofit that helps innovators in government transform public systems to focus on measureable and equitable outcomes. Their sister organization, Social Finance UK, launched the world's first pay for success project; since their founding in 2011, we've been a pioneer in brining outcome-based funding to the United States. She shared their public sector practice works within government's existing funding and procurement structures to identify promising interventions, implement outcomes-based solutions and improve program performance through data-driven insights.
- Ms. Levy gave an overview of Second Chance Act/Pay for Success grant stating the timeline for this grant is 4.5 years. She states under the FY 2020 Second Chance Act Pay for Success

initiative, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) is assisting state, local and tribal governments in either enhancing existing outcome based contracts with reentry or permanent supportive housing (PSH) service providers. The grant aims to enhance or establish outcome based contracts to help ensure accountability of contract service providers and incentivize improved performance over time, improving outcomes related to recidivism, housing stability and substance use for formally incarcerated people. The Maximum award amount is \$1.5-\$2.5M (depending on category), most of which would fund the outcome based contracted services; up to \$200K of each award may be used to research, price, write, negotiate and finalize the service contracts during an initial 12-month planning phase. Applicants may propose to engage sub recipients to complete this work.

- Ms. Charpentier shared the La DPS&C was awarded \$2.5M by the US Department of Justice's Second Chance Act Pay for Success initiative to implement a new outcome based contract to serve recently released offenders with substance use disorders. This first 12 months of the grant will include project design, outcome based contract development and creation of a performance management plan to be used throughout the service delivery period.
 - **The challenge:**
 1. Need for robust services to address substance use disorder. 73% of offenders within LA DPS&C meet the criteria for substance use disorder
 2. Persistent lack of equity in criminal justice system. 66% of prisoners in LA are black; 79% of habitual offenders are black (compared to 33% of the state population)
 3. Mismatch between supply of recovery housing and need. 252 recovery beds in Greater New Orleans & Jefferson Parish (most offer the lowest level of support); 93,000 individuals with substance use disorders
 - **Project Proposal:**
 1. The program will serve individuals who have recently been released from prison who have a history of substance use disorders
 2. Individuals will be identified prior to release and will receive services while they remain in prison; following release, they will immediately transition to recovery housing, continue behavioral health services and receive support in obtaining and retaining a job
 3. Providers will be paid based on the achievement of predefined outcomes such as engagement, stable housing and remaining out of incarceration; the level of contingency and the specific outcome measures will be defined during design period
- Robert Vehock stated the need for sharing this presentation to Reentry Advisory Council is to gain support to overcome some of the barriers mentioned. He stated RAC will play a similar role as in the other grants being leadership and oversight.

Employer Advisory Committee, Rhett Covington, Assistant Secretary

- Assistant Secretary Covington gave an update on the Employer Advisory Committee (EAC) which is a subcommittee of this body. He stated EAC's next meeting is tentatively scheduled to tour Angola to look at the programs offered there. The EAC members were given a curriculum by John Easley the chairman of this group. Part of the membership's role is to make sure DOC's training is up to date, share with us the things we can do better, how we can improve the programs that we currently have in place. This will be the first step getting them into that role of doing site visits.

RAC Subcommittee Updates:

- **New Beginnings, Jodi Mallet, DPSC**
 - Ms. Mallet stated since restrictions have been lifted due to Covid she has been able to enter the facilities and enroll 10 new participants. Making the total participants rise to 50 (17 active pre-releases, 23 post-release and 10 who have been removed due to lack of participation or transferred to a different area).

- Ms. Mallet stated the grant is scheduled to end in September of 2021 however she has applied for a no cost extension. She stated they haven't been able to meet the goals due to Covid so she feels confident the extension will be approved.
- **ARES, Allison Bradford, DPSC**
 - Ms. Bradford stated that the Adult Reentry and Employment Strategies (ARES) planning grant is also applying for a no cost extension due to Covid.
 - ARES is a planning grant that combines the efforts of state and local partners to identify, recognize and respond to gaps in services and other key activities that lead to employment and re-integration upon release.
 - Ms. Bradford stated the group has been focusing on policy, employer engagement, pilot opportunities and the public information campaign.
 - Ms. Bradford state they have contracted with the Council of State Government to focus on the policy piece of the grant and during the last RAC meeting Council of State Government presented their findings sharing there are over 800 plus structural barriers to employment imposed by LA law and regulation. This includes legal limitations that either allow or require the disqualification of workers with criminal convictions. Council of State Governments gave us 8 recommendations to bring to legislation:
 1. Place reasonable limits on the age of convictions that can be considered.
 2. Place reasonable limits of the categories of convictions that can be considered and prohibit consideration of expunged convictions.
 3. Prohibit denial based on convictions that do not have a direct relationship to the duties and responsibilities of the licensed activity.
 4. Require licensing bodies to identify the specific offenses that may be used as a basis for denial of licensure.
 5. Require individualized consideration of applicants and their offenses as guided by an evaluation of specified statutory factors.
 6. Allow applicants to receive a determination about eligibility before applying for licensure or pursuing general licensing requirements.
 7. Ensure that written notice of conviction-based denial includes a full explanation of the reasons for denial and notice of opportunities for appeal or reapplication.
 8. Significantly limit exceptions to the general law for specific licensing bodies.
 - Ms. Bradford stated the Reentry Workforce Portal will help candidates build a resume. Candidates are able to communicate with possible employers through supervised messages. Employers can request interviews with candidates. A virtual interview can also be conducted through LearnMax. All contact is supervised and secure. Employers will be able to post available job opportunities as well. She encouraged everyone to visit the www.doc.la.gov/returnforgood website where you can find the Governor's message, current success stories, the Workforce Portal, Employer benefits, a small sample of the education programs we offer and upcoming events.
 - Ms. Bradford spoke about the pilot program will start with the Welding program in Caddo and Raymond Laborde stating each site will host up to 20 students which will include 1 year (3 semesters) courses earning NCCER Core, NCCER Welding I, and NCCER Welding II Certifications. (All taught by NCCER certified instructors)
 - Ms. Bradford stated the next program will be the Deckhand Program in Tangipahoa Parish this program will host up to 50 students in a year which are 2-3 weeks in length. The students will earn NCCER Core, OSHA 10 certifications and customized hands-on deck training (taught by L.L. Marine Inc. Employees). Upon completion, work release opportunity at L.L. Marine Inc. and other employers in this field. This industry is in high demand. We could possibly provide the workforce up and down the river.
 - Ms. Bradford shared the final program will be the Automotive Program offered in Tangipahoa Parish that will host up to 20 students which is a 3-15-month program (each certification takes approximately 3 months) earning up to 5 ASE Certifications (Engine Repair, Suspension and Steering, Brakes, Air Conditioning, Electronics and others). She stated these classes are taught by ASE certified tutors and facility staff. She finished by stating these programs are slated to start June 1, 2021.

- **Public Information Campaign, Kelsey Pearce, DPSC**
 - Ms. Pearce recalled the Return for Good Campaign is a campaign targeting employers and letting them know about the different programs we have for currently incarcerated individuals to alleviate or reduce barriers post release.
 - Ms. Pearce shared the Departments social media ads and banners currently placed on Facebook to draw attention to the Return for Good website which has a link to the Departments website where the workforce portal is located.
 - Ms. Pearce stated the Return for Good Campaign was kickoff in April which was Second Chance month but stressed the work will continue to be an initiative pass April.
 - Ms. Pearce shared the purpose of the Return for Good Campaign was to inform employers, supervisors, HR personnel and other members of the community on the benefits of hiring formerly incarcerated individuals and changing the stigma.
 - Ms. Pearce shared the plan is to:
 1. Develop new language by using employer focused language, learning effective marketing strategies, utilizing a marketing firm and reducing the use of acronyms.
 2. Strengthen the Departments website for potential employers
 3. Building new employer and community relationships
 - Ms. Pearce recapped the takeaways and success learned during #WorkforceWednesday which took place in February-April stating the need for continued efforts to engage with the community on monthly webinars/eblast, identify the right language/terminology which appeals to local employer, continue conversations with other state on how to open national conversations and solutions and identify and capture success stories.
 - Alfreda Tillman-Bester asked for the RAC membership to receive notice of these events and when they are happening. Ms. Pearce responded that she will add the RAC membership to the email group to receive the eblast. Assistant Secretary Covington also added that on the Departments website you can view those past events from the recordings.
- **Other Grant Updates, Robert Vehock, DPSC**
 - Mr. Vehock shared the pending grants (that have not been awarded or DOC is currently working on) applications:
 1. BJA FY 2021 - Adult Drug Court and Veterans Treatment Court program which is an enhancement and expansion grant supporting the 21st and 22nd JDC.
 2. NIY FY 2021 – Research and Evaluation of Violence Against Women which is being led by LSU Social Research and Evaluation Center with DOC as a team member. This grant will enhance our current TIGER tool and developing a risk of violence against women specifically algorithm.
 3. DOL FY 2021 – Young Adult Reentry Partnership which is being led by Council of State Governments and Cornell University. Mr. Vehock stated Louisiana along with Kentucky have been chosen as implementation sites. This grant is a way for LSTCS to continue the re-boot programs pass the expiration of those funds and DOC to provide more supports services post-release like stipends and needs based cost.
 - Mr. Vehock stated that currently DOC is supporting and don't have an active partnership with is the BJA FY 2021 Second Chance Act Community-Based Reentry Program which is led by:
 - Inter-Tribal Council of Louisiana (ITCLA)
 - Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO Works)
 - First 72+
 - Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans (CCANO)
 - Mr. Vehock stated the Department is trying to get better at sharing information about grants and what's out there. Grants currently open are:
 - Smart Probation: Innovations in Supervision Initiative
 - Innovations in Reentry Initiative: Building System Capacity & Testing Strategies to Reduce Recidivism
 - Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant and Substance Abuse Program
 - Second Chance Act: Adult Reentry Education, Employment, Treatment and Recovery

- Second Chance Act Pay for Success Initiative
- Mr. Vehock shared to find these and more grant opportunities visit: <http://www.ojp.gov/funding/explore/current-funding-opportunities>

RAC Strategic Plan

- Assistant Secretary Covington entertained a motion to adopt the revised RAC Strategic Plan. A motion to accept the minutes was put forward by Joseph Ardoin, second by Robert Hanser stained with no votes against. The RAC Strategic Plan was unanimously adopted.

Other Business

- Deputy Secretary Myer stated that Senator Troy Carters seat on the RAC is currently vacant. He shared we will work with the State Senate in getting that seat filled.

Public Comment

- No public comment.

Adjournment

- Alfreda Bester entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 AM. Bridget Dinvaut adopted the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting will be held on August 19, 2021 at 9:30 AM the location is TBD.