

Reentry Advisory Council (RAC)
4rd Quarter 2021 Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom
Thursday, November 18, 2021

Attendees Present:

Chairman Louis Reine, LA-AFL-CIO
Dennis Grimes, Louisiana Sheriff's Association
Winona Connor, Louisiana Housing Corporation
Rhett Covington, Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections
Tavares Walker, Designee for Ava M. Cates, LA Workforce Commission
Justin Lacour, Designee for Bridget Dinvaut, Louisiana District Attorney's Association
Courtney Joiner, Designee for Robert D. Hanser, University of Louisiana at Monroe
Karissa Page, Designee for Jennifer Katzman, Department of Health
James LeBlanc, Department of Public Safety and Corrections, Headquarters
Stacye Falgout, Designee for Randy Lavespere, Department of Public Safety and Corrections
Joseph Prejean, Big Poppas Fitness Gym
Francis Abbott, Designee for Sheryl Ranatza, Committee on Parole
Camille Conway, Designee for Dr. Monty Sullivan, Louisiana Community and Technical College System

Absent:

Joseph M Ardoin Jr., LA State Building & Construction Trades Council
Christian Rhodes, LA Association of Business and Industry
Rémy Voisin Starns, Louisiana Public Defender Board
Judge Fred Crifasi, 19th Judicial District Court
Judge Arthur L. Hunter, Orleans Criminal District Court
Paul R. Murray, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center
Tony Bacala, LA House of Representatives
Marketa Garber Walters, Department of Children and Family Services

Vacant:

Association of Builders and Contractors seat
Senator District 7 seat

Call to Order

- Meeting was called to order by Chairman Louis S. Reine at 9:34 am.

Roll Call

- Roll was called and a quorum was established 13 of 23 present

Approval of the May 2021 Meeting Minutes

- Chairman Louis S. Reine entertained a motion to adopt the May 2021 minutes. A motion to accept the minutes was put forward by Joseph M. Ardoin, seconded by Joseph A. Prejean. No abstentions and no votes against. The minutes were unanimously adopted.

Welcome and Introductions, Chairman Louis S. Reine

- Chairman Louis S. Reine welcomed everyone.

Opening Remarks, Secretary James M. LeBlanc

- Secretary LeBlanc welcomed and thanked everyone for attending. Secretary LeBlanc explained the importance of sharing information and the progress that has been made in regards to Justice Reinvestment via a PowerPoint presentation. He stated that the JRI annual reports through 2020

have been posted to the Department of Public Safety & Corrections' (DOC) website and that the 2021 report will be posted within a week.

- 2017 JRI Package Goals
 - Focusing prison beds on the most serious offenders;
 - Strengthening community supervision;
 - Clearing away barriers to successful reentry; and,
 - Reinvesting the savings into recidivism reduction and crime victim support.
- The national average incarceration rate as of today is 562 per 100,000 compared to 419 in 2019. Secretary LeBlanc stated that the incarceration rate for Louisiana should be close to the national. He also mentioned that DOC has enjoyed the largest reduction in the incarceration rate of any state.
- 2021 Key Successes
 - Reduced use of prison beds for non-violent convictions
 - Reductions in Imprisonment Rate, Prison Population and Community Corrections Population (which lowered Probation & Parole officer caseloads).
 - Reduction in use of Habitual offender statute
 - Increase in use of probation
 - Increase in Discretionary Parole
 - Decreased Admissions to prison (2020 & 2021)
 - Decrease sentence lengths for non-violent offenses
 - Use of Compliance Credits as both a carrot and a stick
 - Reinvestment of overall Savings
- JRI Goal: Focus prison beds on those who pose a serious threat to public safety.
 - Secretary LeBlanc stated prison population reduction has gone from 21,000 to 13,000 at the local level and from 18,500 to 13,256 in the state prisons.
 - Secretary LeBlanc stated that double bunking has been reduced in areas where there were potential security issues. He stated that reduction in the prison population at the local level is where DOC generates savings at \$26.31 a day.
- JRI Goal: Strengthen Community Supervision (Probation & Parole). Focusing resources on those most likely to reoffend.
 - Secretary LeBlanc stated that number of individuals on community supervision went down from 71,528 to 49,627 statewide. He mentioned that the caseload numbers per field officer were reduced from 140 to 99.
- JRI Goal: Focus prison beds on those who pose a serious threat to public safety.
 - Reduced use of Habitual Offender Enhancement
 - Secretary LeBlanc stated the admissions for Habitual Offenders decreased from 466 instances in 2016 to 57 instances in 2020.
- JRI Goal: Reinvest a substantial portion of the savings.
 - Act 261 directs 30% of the annual savings to the General Fund with the remainder of the realized savings to be invested into the following for categories:
 - Victims' Services (LCLE): Grants for victims' services, treatment, and transitional housing as well as victim-focused training for justice system professionals
 - Community Investments: Incentive grants to parishes, judicial districts and nonprofit community partner organizations to expand evidence-based prison alternatives
 - DPS&C Strategic Investments: Targeted investments in community supervision and recidivism reduction programming in prisons, jails and work release facilities
 - Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ) Strategic investments: Juvenile justice initiatives and programs (applies to year 2 savings and subsequent years)
 - Distribution of Total Reinvestment Dollars
 - Year 1
 - 30% state general fund
 - 70% {20%-victims' services, 30%-community investments, 50%-DPS&C strategic investments}

- Subsequent Years
 - 30% state general fund
 - 20% OJJ strategic investments
 - 50% {20%-victims' services, 30%-community investments, 50%-DPS&C strategic investments}
 - Cumulative Savings
 - Secretary LeBlanc stated a total accumulated savings of 114.8 million dollars has been invested through Justice Reinvestment. He also mentioned this is actually establishing a great foundation for the state to do things in the communities, in the prisons, in Probation and Parole and in the office of juvenile justice.
- Savings Breakdown
 - Secretary LeBlanc shared that 34.5 million dollars has been returned to the general fund over the first four years. He mentioned the total investment in victims is 13.4 million dollars and that the state has caught up three years on victim reparations obligations.
 - Secretary LeBlanc stated savings for OJJ is now 13.2 million dollars over the three years they have been involved.
 - He mentioned DOC investments in reentry total \$35 million and that Community Incentive grants total \$20.1 million.
- Office of Juvenile Justice
 - Total current budget: \$5,036,476 and total cumulative investment to date: \$13,207,512.
 - Statewide Juvenile Diversion Programs
 - Diversion programs offer juvenile court judges community-based alternatives to formal adjudication into juvenile detention system.
 - These programs implement research informed, evidence-based or promising practice programs divert youth arrested for certain offenses into programming to address the behavior as an alternative to detention.
 - The diversion program is facilitated by judicial districts, community based providers, as well as Cities and City Marshall's Offices.
 - OJJ selected 14 diversion programs to receive reinvestment funds thus far and intend on continuing to expand this program with future JRI funding.
- Crime Victims Related Services
 - Total Current Budget: \$4,226,658 and total cumulative investment to date: \$13,473,436.
 - Capital Area Family Justice Center (CAFJC)
 - The CAFJC is located within the Family and Youth Service Center on Government Street in Baton Rouge (East Baton Rouge).
 - The purpose of CAFJC is to empower victims of family violence with the resources necessary to maintain safety and stability to themselves and their families. It will also increase the safety level of victims of violence and prevent families from continual abuse and the negatives effects that domestic violence has on families.
 - The CAFJC collaborates with the community partners and agencies working together to provide a safe and welcoming environment for the victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.
 - Crime Victims Reparations Fund
 - Funding is used to pay down the backlog of crime victim claims pending from previous years.
 - Priority is given to any crime victim claim that comes directly from the victim or victim's family for assistance in lost wages, prescription drug costs or other out of pocket expenses.

- The board also receives claims from hospitals, funeral homes and coroner offices who request reimbursement for crime victim related services, such as funeral expenses.
 - Crime Victims Related Services
 - The Domestic Violence Housing Assistance Program (DVHAP) is a project that provides flexible housing assistance to domestic violence survivors in various communities across Louisiana.
 - The DVHAP has assisted domestic violence survivors with rental payments, transportation payments, child care, housing application fees, utility assistance, document fees, moving/relocation expenses and safety enhancement costs.
 - Survivors are also connected with direct advocacy services to find maintain a secure housing environment.
 - Crime Lab Funding
 - To purchase equipment for sampling DNA
 - Provide overtime funding for working DNA backlogs
 - Judicial District Courts
 - Funding of Victim Assistance Coordinators assistants, Victims' Rights Week Campaign, domestic violence awareness among youth.
- Community Reinvestment
 - Total current budget \$6,339,987 and total cumulative investment to date \$34,454,868.
 - Community Incentive Grant (CIG) program
 - Using a competitive process, funding for the CIG program was allocated to community organizations who submitted and were awarded proposals to reduce prison admissions, reduce returns to prison and improve community coordination of reentry resources.
 - Community incentive grant recipients work closely with their Reentry Coalitions, the local P&P district office and the staff at the Regional Reentry Centers.
 - Once an individual is released, community organizations provide or refer individuals to a variety of services, including but not limited to: education programs, family reunification services, housing placement; employment placement; mentoring, job readiness training, civil legal services, transportation access and/or vocational training.
 - Funding was awarded to community organizations in the following Tier 1 and 2 Parishes: Caddo, East Baton Rouge, St Tammany, Jefferson, Orleans, Lafayette, Calcasieu, Rapides, Ouachita, Terrebonne, Lafourche and Bossier.
 - Secretary LeBlanc reported that the Louisiana Parole Project, United Way of Northwest Louisiana, Goodwill Industries for Southeastern Louisiana and Volunteers of America of North Louisiana are some of the organizations that the DOC is investing in the Community Incentive Grant Project.
- DOC Investments
 - Total current budget \$10,566,646 and total cumulative savings invested \$33,593,590.
 - Reentry related programming, services and staffing
 - Expansion of Regional Reentry Centers, which are DOC partnerships with regional jails across the state to house state level and to provide critical reentry programming prior to release

Expansion of Vocational and Educational Programming for Industry Based Certifications funding the programs and required supplies. Some examples:

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| Culinary | IC3 | Reentry workforce | SERVSAFE |
| Cosmetology | Carpentry | Moral Recognition Therapy | Parenting Program |
| ATLO Stations | Truck driving/CDL | P.E. Welder-Fitter Apprentice | Small Engine |
| Automotive | Heavy Equipment | Furniture Restoration | IBC Expansion and Computer Coding |
| Move on curriculum for females | Tyro Leadership program for males | | |

- Modernization of Pre-release Reentry Programming, including a Reentry Roadmap Curriculum Pilot with 6,000 inmates.
- Expansion of Reentry Staff (transition specialists) statewide in local jails
- Creation of Community Coordinators: 10 part time positions statewide to work directly with community organizations who provide reentry related services post release. (We hope to have our investment expanded to full time positions with funds from local partners).
- Expansion of Mental Health Screening Services in North & South Louisiana
- Employment Related:
 - Creation of Reentry Workforce Portal
 - 211 Statewide Partnership for Resource Directory
 - Ascension Staffing Contract: Employment placement assistance for IBC completers to help secure jobs for people prior to release from prison.
 - CEO Works Contract: provides support and employment placement assistance for high risk offenders contingent upon stat funds being matched with SNAP ENT or LRS funds.
 - ATLO- job applications while in prison/review virtual interviews while in prison.
- Probation and Parole: Expansion of Day Reporting Centers (DRC)
 - DRC are non-residential and non-custodial programs that provide reentry related services as well as therapeutic and rehabilitative alternatives to incarceration for lower level probation or parole violations. DRC provides effective and cost efficient interventions that reduce recidivism for adult offenders under probation and/or parole supervision with the state.
- Staffing
 - Created 15 reentry program managers in probation and parole districts to coordinate with community regarding available services for clients etc. These positions are filled by probation and parole agents whose primary role is to facilitate successful transition of people being released from prison into the community by connecting them with appropriate available resources.
- Public information campaign/adds to promote available services and reduce stigma.
- General Resources:
 - Bus Passes (Monroe, Shreveport, New Orleans) 500 thirty day bus passes, 60 ten day bus passes, 30 one day bus passes
 - LA identification card vouchers for probationers
 - Hygiene kits to provide to clients upon arrival to district until IWF items are delivered.
 - Prepaid cell phones to give to clients, includes phone and one month of service with unlimited talk, text and 2GB of data
 - Salvation Army Shelter Vouchers for Baton Rouge District
 - Living Walters Homeless Shelter Vouchers for Baton Rouge District

- 14 hour driving course and road skills test (Thibodaux, Alexandria, New Iberia, Baton Rouge, and Natchitoches).
 - Direct Investment Specialty Courts (reentry/drug/mental health/veteran)
 - Provide Lump Sum to the Supreme Court for Grants to JDC's for the expansion of existing specialty courts and the creation of new specialty courts. (\$1.8million)
 - Directly Partnered with 5 longstanding individual Reentry Courts for expansion of services and staffing (Lafayette, Orleans, St Tammany, Baton Rouge, Jefferson (\$1.5 million over 3 years)
- COVID impact on Justice System
 - Secretary LeBlanc mentioned that due to COVID's impact, there was a reduction within the prisons. He also mentioned he received the facility reports at the local level and it was up 198 which is the biggest increase seen since the last year and a half in a month.
- Overall, the JRI work done thus far has established a strong foundation for continued improvement to the Louisiana Criminal Justice. The annual report is available on the DOC website: www.doc.la.gov
- Moving forward, DPS&C in collaboration with other state and local partners, will continue to monitor progress, analyze outcomes and identify opportunities for additional progress and reform.
- Secretary LeBlanc mentioned to have the director of the Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI), Tanisha Matthews, included on one of the agendas so she can deliver information about some of the things they are doing in that area.
- Secretary LeBlanc stated LDH is helping with getting Medicaid cards for offenders when they are released. He explained the focus is to request a waiver where they can process the application 30 days prior to discharge for certain offenders, who will then release with a Medicaid card.
- Secretary LeBlanc mentioned the Falcon group was hired to evaluate restrictive housing and mental health within the Department.
- Secretary LeBlanc thanks everyone for a job well done.
- Louis Reine asked if Probation & Parole is getting enough agents in light of the current workforce dilemma?
- Secretary LeBlanc answered, saying Probation & Parole was not affected as badly as the situation for correction officers. He stated the P&P agents are doing okay, with the caseloads especially. He stated things are going good on the P&P side but struggling on the correctional side.

Remarks from Governor's Office, Leslie Chambers, Governor's Office

- Leslie Chambers with the Governor's Office informed everyone that the Governor's office is in the process of gathering information from its departments and agencies, as well as stakeholders who intend on filing legislation. She mentioned the Governor's office is vetting proposed legislation with the Governor right now. She asked those present to submit any ideas relative to new criminal justice legislation for the upcoming session or if there were any ideas on needed from a policy perspective. Ms. Chambers asked to be contacted via email at Leslie.chambers.la.gov.

JRI Updates, Nicole George, DPS&C

- Housing Program Updates
 - Nicole George explained that the housing program is currently accepting all applications at this time, and today is the last day to receive applications by 4:30PM.
 - Nicole shared that 14 applications were received, with 10 of those being re-applicant because an individual needs to reapply each year to keep the list up to date and as current as possible.
 - She mentioned four new applications from new providers were received and is expecting at least three more applications.
- Community Incentive Grant Program Update

- Nicole George shared that she is working on finalizing the notice of funding availability, also known as the NOFA, for the tier one parishes. Previous contracts in those areas are now in their third year and wrapping up.
- She mentioned that applicants that are in Caddo, East Baton Rouge Parish, St. Tammany, Jefferson and Orleans parishes are welcome to apply for the NOFA opportunity.
- Nicole shared that it will be an exclusively online application process.
- She mentioned that she will be hosting an application workshop to help everyone through the process with uploading their applications a week or two after releasing NOFA.
- Nicole stated that along with the NOFA they have decided to focus more on comprehensive case management for those that are in the CIG program. She explained the "new" NOFA would extensively just work with case management and then have an opportunity for direct financial assistance for the participants.

RAC Subcommittee Updates:

- **New Beginnings, Jodi Mallet, DPS&C:** Jodi Mallet stated the New Beginnings program is a Second Chance Act funded program that provides evidence based treatment to offenders who are struggling with addiction, substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health conditions. The goal is to help them successfully reintegrate into society and not to reoffend. She mentioned the target population is 200 adult offenders housed at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center for men and Louisiana Correctional Institute for women. Jodi shared that currently 62 participants are now enrolled; 15 active pre-release; 35 post release with 11 of those being out less than six months; five has been out over six months and 17 has been out over a year. She stated that there has been only two that has been rearrested, 12 participants that have been removed due to lack of participation or they released to an area that is not services. She stated there are 11 males and 38 females; 11 African Americans and 1 Hispanic participant. She mentioned a no cost extension was applied for which was received that will last until the end of 2022, but the grant budget was \$7,409,996 and the balance currently is \$391,901.
 - Assistant Secretary Covington commented saying this program is highly effective. He explained when someone who releases from incarceration with a serious mental illness particularly they have a co-occurring disorder they tend to be rearrested in less than six months. He stated with tracking from the baseline that over 100 individuals who released with those conditions and 99 of them are back in less than six months.
 - Mr. Louis Reine asked what was the target goal?
 - Jodi answered by saying the target goal is to consider them successful if an individual have been out for six months or more without a re-arrest.
- **ARES, Robert Vehock, DPS&C:** Robert explained that the ARES project started with an initial planning grant that led into implementation dollars and currently awaiting the go for next year of implementation. He stated the major concepts of ARES that are included in the ARES grant is how to do a better job of providing a job that helps lead/lay groundwork for a career and how to remove barriers. He mentioned that this has led to three primary arms of ARES: public information campaign or return for good, transitional employment pilot and the removal of barriers.
- **Pay for Success Grant, Jessica Exkano, DPS&C:** Jessica explained the Second Chance Act Pay for Success Initiative focuses on treating substance use disorder through recovery, housing and reentry wraparound services. She stated that in 2019 73% of the population met the diagnostic criteria for substance use disorder, which is over half of the population. The existing barriers that exist upon reentry for the formerly incarcerated. General reentry barriers includes housing, transportation and employment which all leads to recidivism. She stated when adding the additional layer of substance use disorder reentry barriers this population basis a greater risk of relapse fatal and non-fatal overdoses, death and recidivism. She mentioned when looking at the recovery landscape for that population some issues like insufficient beds, geographical restrictions due to parole, no quality assurance and quality control of existing recovery houses by LDH are a few of the challenges. She further explained the purpose of the grant is not only to increase recovery housing specifically designed for the population, but also to bundle that with housing, employment and behavioral health services. She explained the solution is developmental ecology, which is a

framework to understand the context in which development occurs. Jessica stated the department wants to replace the existing ecology with an ecology tailored to support the formerly incarcerated. She explained the greater New Orleans area is the main area of focus. The National Alliance of Recovery Residences classifies recovery houses from level of service provision in order of increasing intensity with level four providing clinical services. She stated the department has determined a prioritized pipe-line from which to select program participants. This includes: STR/LaSOP, Steve Hoyle/Blue Walters and those identified for substance use through the TIGER mini needs assessment. She explained the three stages of the Project Plan is: Phase I- planning (12months); Phase II- Implementation (36months); Phase III- Evaluation outcomes (6 months). She shared that Deliverable 1 has been completed and is beginning Deliverable 2.

- **EAC, Assistant Secretary Covington, DPS&C:** Assistant Secretary Covington explained that Reentry Advisory Council is designed primarily to help make sure that training programs are responsive to the needs of employers in the community. He asked if anyone wants to join the committee to please contact him.
 - He explained that the site visit to RLCC was postponed until the January 27, 2022 meeting. Assistant Secretary Covington asked if anyone wants to attend the tour at RLCC to please let him know.
 - He explained that Technical Education State Wide director Kelsey Osman reported that the career and technical education programs that are still operating in the state and local facilities are currently back up and running.
 - He mentioned DOC is working with Camille Conaway and others with LCTCS, as well as individual colleges such as BRCC and CLTCC, to prepare for the Justice Pell expansion again in 2023 into state prisons and how to partner with local jails.
 - He stated that Shareika Burris, who oversees the Carl Perkins grant funds which were approved and have did the first round of purchasing for this fiscal year. He added that the department is doing a comprehensive local needs assessment right now to determine how to spend the rest of the grant funds over the course of this fiscal year with various partners who are eligible to receive funding.
 - He shared that the department is working with prisons and jails to make sure that everyone in prerelease is going through the prerelease program is being enrolled into the Reentry Workforce Portal. He mentioned that the department is in the mist of planning for another Public Information Campaign for Second Chance month (April) in 2022.
 - Assistant Secretary Covington shared that Ben Castro, who is a former incarcerated person who works with Ideal Market, has done a good job of hiring individuals. He also stated that Ben Castro started a nonprofit that is getting donated vehicles fixed up and assigned or granted to individuals who have jobs that really need to have a vehicle; he had his first person provided with a vehicle on November 15, 2021.
 - Louis Reine asked if there is a program for inmates to choose training programs or a career that better fits what they are good at doing or interest in doing?
 - Secretary Covington answered by saying yes to certain extend He stated the focus has been on bringing programs back just to have programs and making sure they are aligned with the demand occupations in the regional sectors of the state.

CNA Summary Presentation, Robert Vehock, DPS&C

- Robert Vehock explained the Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative is one of the fundamental components of the reentry initiative. The purpose of this Community Assessment is to begin the work of developing a Comprehensive Community Reentry Plan for the community by focusing on the community's assets, gaps, barriers, proposed solutions, case management strategy and plans to follow evidence-based practices for justice involved citizen services. In order for have a consistent frame of reference across sites. Robert stated that he did received 10 responses back.

IST Subcommittee Summary, Robert Vehock, DPS&C

- Robert Vehock stated that every month information is received from the Local Coalitions through the Community Coordinators that talk about what is happening in their area, issues and concerns.

He stated that this is consolidated into charges for the subcommittees under IST, which is maintained through spreadsheets.

- Karissa Page shared that the approach that is being taken with the health care subcommittee is to make it a symposium type format presenting different health care topics related to reentry or research from either national papers publication to address healthcare priorities across the state for the population.
- Robert explained that the Housing Subcommittee presented a Breaking Barriers housing opportunity document, which is to assist individuals with finding affordable housing and completing housing applications.
- Robert explained that the Employment subcommittee has been working with the local reinvestment boards on trying to do a better job of coordinating and collaborating on having a universal communication across all of them.
- Robert stated the majority of the work that the education subcommittee been doing is around Justice Pell reinstatement and expanding educational opportunities in the day reporting centers.
- Amy Cable stated the Department of Education recently had negotiated rulemaking around the Pell Grant for this population when it comes to terminology and language.
- Robert gave updates on the Legal Subcommittee. He stated Legal has been focusing on areas such as detainees, housing and child support. Robert explained that from a detainer perspective, the subcommittee was able to get a survey sent out by the DOC to get response from all of the other Departments of Corrections across the nation and received 23 responses.
- He explained that the housing subcommittee put forth a new tenant selection policy.
- Robert explained that ACT 339 is related to the suspension of child support obligations for individuals while they are incarcerated.
- Judge Edwards explained the Legal Subcommittee of the IST is exploring the possibility of creating an APP that could be available on a person's phone that would help individuals to provide help to themselves.
- Robert shared that the Data Subcommittee is working on getting various showing that were significantly closer to being able to provide more consistent and clear information about not only who was just released but who is about to be released from custody.

Other Business, Rhett Covington, Assistant Secretary

- Assistant Secretary Covington reminded everyone of the new Statute changes to the RAC that requires more participation from members. He thanked everyone for making an effort to attend the meeting. He mentioned that there is a new member organization, the Council of the Children of incarcerated parents caregivers. He stated they are working to get replacement or membership for Louisiana Senate and Louisiana Association of Builders and Contractors. He mentioned in 2022 the plan is to return to live in-person meeting. He explained the 2022 meeting schedule will be issued and copies of the presentations will be issued.

Public Comment

- No public comment.

Adjournment

- Louis Reine entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:53 AM. Tavares Walker adopted the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting will be held on February 17, 2022 at 9:30 AM the location is TBD.