

REENTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES

Thursday, January 14, 2016

Attendees Present:

Secretary James LeBlanc, Dept. of Public Safety & Corrections, Chairman
Assistant Secretary Rhett Covington, Dept. of Public Safety & Corrections,
Designee for Secretary LeBlanc, LA DPS&C
Dale LeBlanc, Association of Builders & Contractors (Telephone Conference)
Sue Austin, Designee for Secretary Kathy Kliebert, LA DHH
Charlie Habig, Designee for Louis Reine, AFL-CIO
David Helveston, Designee for Dr. Monty Sullivan, LA Community & Technical
College System
Joseph Ardoin, LA State Bldg. Const. Trade Council
Dr. Jenee Slocum, Designee for Executive Director Curt Eysink, Workforce
Commission

Absent:

Mike Cazes, LA Sheriff's Association
Senator Elbert Guillory, State Senator
James Landry, LA Association of Business & Industry
Steven Pylant, State Representative
Kim Matherne, Designee for Secretary Marketa Garner Walters, Secretary Dept. of
Children & Family

Others:

Francis Abbott, LSP
Jennifer Abbott, LSP
Randall Clement, LCIW
Angela Day, LCTCS
Linda Fjeldsjo, Catholic Charities
Tom Jarlock, DHH
Judge William J. Knight, 22nd JDC
Dan Krutz, LA Interchurch Conference
Sheryl Ranatza, Board of Pardons and Parole
Gary Sumrall, LSP

Dept. of Public Safety & Corrections Headquarters Staff:

Gretchen McCarstle, Office of Offender Reentry
Tammy Jetson, Office of Offender Reentry

Meeting Called to Order at 9:40 a.m. by Assistant Secretary Rhett Covington

Approval of Minutes

- Motion made by Joseph Ardoin to approve the minutes from September 28, 2015 board meeting
- Seconded by David Helveston

Opening Remarks from Secretary James LeBlanc

- Secretary LeBlanc advised council members to initiate the process of re-appointment for the Reentry Advisory Council (RAC)
 - Noted change of DHH and Workforce Commission Leadership
 - Voiced intentions to bring appointments to new leaderships' attention
- Confirmed his own re-appointment and mentioned recent meeting with newly elected Governor Edwards
- Mentioned Current Resolution #82
 - Establishes Justice Reinvestment Task Force
 - Secretary James LeBlanc is the Chairman
 - Similar membership structure as Sentencing Commission
 - Funds saved through alternatives to incarceration, and potential lowered incarceration rates, are to be reinvested back into the community
 - Probation/Parole revocations greatly contributing to high incarceration rates
 - State Prisons overcrowded – 50%+ state offenders housed in local jails
 - Acknowledged need for additional local programs, yet commended local LA efforts thus far
 - Local Reentry/Reporting Centers helping, but much work to be done
- Mission of Justice Reinvestment Taskforce and RAC will overlap, stated the need for comprehensive cooperation among both parties
- Mentioned Louisiana Prison Initiative
 - Headed by Assistant Secretary Rhett Covington
- Reminder about intentions to expand RAC, add various additional representatives

- Within 1-2 weeks will be organizing legislative package to present to RAC for coordination/approval

Remarks from Assistant Secretary Rhett Covington

Reports:

RAC Membership and Structure

- Acknowledged LA Chaplain's Association newly appointed delegate
- Proposed legislation to increase membership, still undecided as whether to expand
- Discussed plans to identify/appoint additional stake-holder members to council
 - District Attorneys' Association, Public Defenders, Judges, Parole Committee
- Justice Reinvestment Taskforce
 - In effect for 1 year
 - Provides financial reports to Secretary, State of LA, and the Governor
 - Key to identifying sustainability and accountability
- Inquired council as to which organizations should be allowed a council seat
 - Public Defenders and District Attorneys vital due to knowledge of and investment in outcomes
- RAC Restructuring
 - Considering whether to expand/consolidate representative positions
- Pell Grant Eligibility for Local Level Offenders
- Consideration of adding Representatives from Dept. of Health and Hospitals (DHH)
 - Rising Trends of Mentally Ill Being Diverted into Prison System
 - Must ensure treatment continues post-release
 - Aging Prison Population
 - Consideration for multiple representatives from DHH (Mental Health/Substance Abuse; Developmental Issues; etc.)
- Difficulties in bringing the numerous local jail programs up to par with State Prison facilities' programs

Employer Liability Legislation

- Judge Schlegel (Jefferson Parish) involved in Reentry Court Initiative
- Barriers with reentry due to employers' fear of employer liability
 - Although Passed 2014 Legislation, it left an exception:
 - Should an ex-offender be convicted of a crime at work consistent with his/her original convicted offense, the employer can be held liable for negligent hiring practices
 - RAC seeking to remove this stipulation

American Corrections Association (ACA)

- Upcoming ACA Conference in New Orleans beginning on Saturday, January 23, 2016
 - RAC Presentation at Conference
 - Seeking to identify risks/needs of reentry candidates
 - Looking to formulate automated system with upcoming grant funds
 - Granting ability to quantify reentry needs by area
- Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative Framework
 - 3 Phases: Intake/Release/Community Supervision
- Reentry Accountability Planning
 - State of the art Action Plan
 - Transition to Community National Model
 - 26 Targets for Change
 - Accountability/Coordination is the primary point of improvement for incarcerated individuals
 - Logistics also an issue for released offenders in maintaining accountability at community centers
 - Focus on Evidence-Based Practices
 - Risk Assessments to gear focus towards offenders with higher risk of recidivism
 - Responsivity Principle used to address effectiveness of treatment
 - Heavy focus on offender education in order to cut recidivism rates, but also need to coordinate with workforce projections to ensure employment

- Follow ups to complete outside educational programs crucial to released offenders' education success
- Expressed need for community mentorship program, or increased encouragement measures, to ensure released offenders attend classes, treatment, and/or support groups once released
- Catalog of State-Wide vocational programs
- Mentioned potential need to switch focus to hands-on assistance for setting up treatment/training for offenders, as self-serve/kiosk based applications are failing
- Discussed cost/benefit analysis of probation/parole officers case load
- Briefly discussed potential need for reentry probation/parole officer additional training/pay incentive in order to possibly facilitate lower recidivism rates
- Discussed complex issue of released offenders, specifically sex offenders, who have no legal residence to return to once released
- Need to address connection of substance abuse and recidivism
- TIGER Risk Analysis System on track to becoming one of most accurate recidivism risk assessors

Louisiana Workforce Commission Presentation

- Rachel Mackey absent, Dr. Jenee Slocum presented remarks
- Workforce Investment Council meeting in December approved plan reflecting federal legislation changes
 - Formulated forecasts for job outlook demand/wages
 - 1-5 Star System for specific industries, ranks jobs on demand
 - Tiered Jobs System to recruit for specific companies
- Critical to plan offender job training around private industry job demand, as well as offenders' interests
- Discussed idea to have job shadowing/field experience in order to ensure adequate job fit with each individual
- Voiced need to address currently changing LA job market as oil/gas industry slows down

- May need to acquire new job outlook data in order to fabricate new training programs and evaluate their demand in the private industry
- Workforce Development Board undergoing federal changes reflecting legislation, seeking additional accountability of training funds utilized by WIC

2016/2017 Meeting Schedule

- Schedule released to RAC, members instructed to advise RAC of any discrepancies

Other New Business

- Angela Day will be directly coordinating with RAC from her new post in order to focus on training and reentry programs
- Changes to Federal legislation will be disseminated to RAC council members
- Seeking methods to distribute success stories to prospective LCTCS applicants
- Aiming to identify ways to provide potential employers of released offenders mentorship of existing ex-offender employers
- Additionally seeking materials, i.e. Training films, to provide to LCTCS prospects

Adjournment

- Motion made by Joseph Ardoin to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dr. Jenee Slocum
- Meeting adjourned at 11:13 a.m.