

**REENTRY ADVISORY COUNCIL &  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MINUTES  
Thursday, March 10, 2011**

**Advisory Council Members Present**

John Walters, ABC Designee  
Dale Simoneaux LSA Designee  
James Landry, LABI  
Whalen Gibbs, DPS&C Designee  
Rev. Donald Miller, Chaplain's Asso.  
Jimmy Sawtell, LC&TCS Designee  
Johnny Riley, LWC Designee

**Advisory Council Members  
Not Present**

Sec. Ruth Johnson, DCFC  
Louis Reine, AFL-CIO  
Senator Elbert Guillory  
Joanne Henig, LDHH  
Rep. Bodi White  
Johnny Sabathe, LSBCTC

**Others Present**

Tammy Jetson, Office of Reentry  
Rhett Covington, Office of Reentry  
Gretchen McCarstle, Office of Reentry  
Phillip Strother, SPARX Welding Technology Institute  
Derrick Prentice, SPARX Welding Technology Institute

Assistant Secretary Gibbs opened the meeting at 9:41am and suggested that Mr. Prentice make his presentation to the members in attendance as there was not a quorum available to officially call the meeting to order.

Mr. Prentice gave a power point presentation to the council at which time he advised that SPARX Welding and Technology Institute was designed to provide welder training in a period of 7 weeks. He indicated that there is a shortage of welders and that within a few years there will be a half-million jobs in welding due to the retirement of many employees and also due to job growth. He indicated that with the accredited training, completers are easily able to advance from the lower pay scale indicated on the power point to the higher wages within a few short months. He also advised there were over one hundred job openings for welding in Houma recently. When SPARX opened the doors in 2010 they were the only accredited welding training facility in the state. He indicated that the trade school programs generally last two years at which time students receive a certificate of completion. Mr. Prentice then introduced Mr. Strother who has been a welder for thirty years and who created the curriculum for the welding and technical programs at the SPARX institute. Mr. Strother went on to tell the Council that there is an instructor for every six students so that they each get individual instruction. The mission of their company is to train people for a career in welding as opposed to just a job and to provide them with a professional education. He indicated that once the

certification is earned the participant can use the certification world wide to obtain employment. He indicated that he had met with Senator Guillory about setting up the program for training for employees and employers along the Hwy. 190 corridor in St. Landry Parish where welders are needed. He plans to work further with the senator as he is interested in the program. Mr. Strother said that 20 students have graduated and they are presently making about \$23.00 per hour and, because of their accreditation, they have no problem finding a job although the Institute does not guarantee employment upon completion.

Mr. Strother asked if anyone had any questions at which time Mr. Walters wanted to know how many hours they train per day and was advised 8 hours.

Mr. Gibbs asked Mr. Strother where their training site was located and was advised that they opened in Houma in November 2010.

Mr. Walters asked how much it would cost for an employer to send someone for training and was told that it cost \$6500.00 with an additional \$500.00 for the tools, if they chose to purchase them there. Students may bring their own tools or purchase them elsewhere.

Mr. Gibbs asked whether training could be provided inside a prison and Mr. Strother replied that they have a portable training trailer that could be taken to a facility to train offenders. Mr. Gibbs noted that we are currently providing fast track training for journeyman welders after 7 weeks. He asked about the possibility of a program such as the one the DPS&C had with Northrup Grumman where they paid the offenders while they were training them as welders and then provided them with a job. Mr. Strother advised they do not have employers with a company like the shipyard but did have small businesses that might provide similar opportunities. They have been meeting with Mr. Paul Perkins at the work release program in St. Francisville about training there. He indicated that they could perhaps train at Angola and get some contract fabrication work that could be performed there. Mr. Riley asked if that would work like Prison Enterprises at which time Mr. Gibbs indicated they are negotiation with a company now that may provide fabrication work to offenders at DCI. Mr. Riley asked if the welders were certified and Mr. Gibbs indicated they had whatever certificate they receive from the technical college welding school.

Mr. Strother stated that the technical college graduates are not certified until after they graduate and are tested by American Welding Society.

Mr. Gibbs asked if there were any females in the training program as the department is hoping to train women in high demand occupations traditionally held by men. Mr. Strother said they don't have any women at the present time but they do hope to get some as women make better welders than men because of good hand and eye coordination.

There were no other questions.

**Item #1 & #2: Call To Order & Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Gibbs called the meeting to order at 10:14am as there was a quorum. He asked for a motion to accept the agenda and approve the minutes of September 9, 2010. A motion was made by Mr. Riley and seconded by Mr. Walters and passed with a unanimous vote.

**Item#3: Opening Remarks**

Mr. Gibbs remarked that we are now the Reentry Advisory Council and that although Sec. Le Blanc could not attend due to another commitment he is still very interested in the Council. Mr. Gibbs advised that the DPS&C has opened three Reentry Centers but lack of funds prevents further expansion at this time. He noted that the Department is committed to providing opportunities for offenders to improve their job skills prior to release.

Mr. Sawtell asked to address the Council with regard to the presentation made by Mr. Strother. He advised that technical colleges do not have a ratio of one instructor for every 35 students. He asked that if anyone knows where one instructor is training 35 welders to please call him. He indicated that they receive a certificate of technical studies when they graduate but few stay that long because they are hired before they finish.

Mr. Walters indicated that Associated Builders and Contractors also have certification because that is what industry wants before they hire.

**Item #4: Presentation of Sparx Welding Technology Institute**

The presentation was made prior to the meeting being called to order.

**Item #5: Election of Co-Chairman**

Mr. Gibbs informed that a co-chairman must be picked annually as required by law and asked for a nomination. Sheriff Cazes was nominated by Mr. Simoneaux. Mr. Landry made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Riley and passed by a unanimous vote. Sheriff Cazes will remain Co-Chairman.

**Item #6: Approval of Reentry Council Meeting Schedule 2011/2012**

Mr. Gibbs indicated that the meetings have been scheduled on Thursdays as has been the case in the past. Mr. Riley asked about the meeting being scheduled during the legislative session and Mr. Gibbs indicated that the meetings are in accordance with the law and could only be changed if the law was amended. Mr. Riley made a motion to accept the schedule presented and it was seconded by Mr. Simoneaux and passed by a unanimous vote.

**Item #7: Regional Criminal Justice Meetings**

Mr. Gibbs advised that the Regional Criminal Justice Meeting schedule has been reduced to semi-annual biased on budget cuts. He again encouraged the Council members to attend or send a representative to learn what else is going on with the reentry program statewide.

Mr. Sawtell informed that employees who are working on an associate degree can now take on line courses and get into Northwestern State University to earn their degree.

**Item #8: Legislation 2011**

No information presented

**Item #9 Local Reentry Coalitions/Taskforce (Rhett Covington)**

**Sentencing Commission Updates**

Mr. Covington presented the Council with information on the Local Coalitions and Task Forces and made them aware of the challenges and barriers of reentry at the local level. He also gave an update with reference to the Sentencing Commission. Details of Mr. Covington's presentation are attached.

**Item #10: Advisory Council Goals and Objectives**

Mr. Gibbs wanted the Council to be aware of the Reentry Radio program in Alexandria and how much the show has helped the community become aware of the reentry initiatives and gives the public information about jobs, housing and Corrections as a whole. He advised that Senator Guillory had recently participated and the Lt. Governor is scheduled to be on in April. The radio show has been successful and recently received an award. Hopefully, it will be expanded to other cities across the state.

**Item #11: Transaction of such other business as may properly come before the Council**

Mr. Gibbs discussed the legislation in House Concurrent Resolution 172. Meetings will be scheduled among agencies to discuss collaboration and sharing of information between all agencies.

He indicated that the legislation introduced by Senator Richmond regarding the Good Moral Conduct Clause did not pass during the prior session but Senator Guillory may reintroduce it after it has been tweaked. Some of the senators did not vote for it initially because they wanted to make sure it was not intended for certain crimes.

Mr. Gibbs asked that the designee forms be completed, updated and returned and asked that the same designee be consistent in attending meetings and not someone new every time.

Mr. Gibbs indicated there was an updated list of the Council with contact information in the folder.

Rev. Miller informed that he has been working with Carolyn Labrand Tilton who has gathered a coalition of 16 different congregations in New Orleans to get offenders involved in Life Coach Training. After training offenders will be mentored by the congregation members... Training classes are scheduled for April 9<sup>th</sup> and April 16<sup>th</sup>. Their plan is to follow up and assist the parolee or probationer when they are unable to reach the probation and parole agent. Mr. Gibbs asked if it was possible for them to go to the prison prior to the offender's release and make the connection with them.

Mr. Covington advised that they work with Ms. Tilton at the day reporting program in New Orleans.

Mr. Riley made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Mr. Simoneaux. Meeting adjourned at 11:08am.

Attachment

**Local Coalitions and Task Forces:** The Council was made aware of several local coalitions that have formed around the State to address the challenges and barriers of reentry on the local level. These coalitions work with returning offenders and with each other to find ways to overcome the challenges faced by returning offenders in that area. These coalitions are seeking recognition, assistance, and support from the Reentry Advisory Council. Coalitions are in operation in Shreveport, Monroe, Alexandria, Lake Charles, Lafayette, Evangeline/St. Landry (STAR), New Iberia, and Baton Rouge. The Lafayette, Star, and New Iberia coalitions also meet together regionally. An effort is being made to create a coalition in New Orleans. One of the Alexandria coalition members sponsored the Reentry Radio show, which is on 88.1 FM in Alexandria and carried on two NPR stations in north Louisiana. They are looking for new stations in south Louisiana and old episodes can be found on the DPS&C website. The Department is supporting them with best practices and would like to post information about them on our website. The Council was informed about the Department's intent to host a webpage detailing the Reentry Advisory Council's members, mission, and goals, as well as to have information about local coalitions and links to reentry best practice websites. One Council member asked about a timeline for the new page and was informed it would be in the next few months if approved. No objections were noted by the Council.

**Sentencing Commission Update by Rhett Covington:** The Commission has been meeting in subcommittees and workgroups over the last several months and recently met as a full Commission to discuss and approve certain requests for legislation.

- The "front end" workgroup addressed mandatory minimums and automatic sentencing enhancements to determine: 1) how many cases are affected by these provisions, 2) whether such limitations on the discretion of the courts cause problems in processing of defendants or in inappropriate use of criminal resources, 3) whether other states have allowed greater discretion, and 4) whether such increased discretion has jeopardized public safety, increased recidivism, or diminished the seriousness of the offense. Proposed legislation for this session would address violent crimes defined in LA R.S. 14:2(b) and CCrP Art 890.1, creating variable and non-variable offense categories. Non-variable offenses would still be considered violent offenses for the purposes of minimum mandatory sentencing and sentencing enhancements, while variable offenses would be left to the discretion of the prosecutor and judge to determine if the offense should be treated as violent or non-violent for the purposes of sentencing.
- The Administrative Sanctions workgroup attempted to address the fact that over 50% of annual prison admissions are probation or parole violators and 44% of those are revoked for technical violations. Proposed legislation would insure swift and sure sanctions by allowing the Probation and Parole Officer to enact sanctions of up to 10 days jail time (60 days per calendar year maximum) without a court hearing or decision of the Parole Board. The Board or court would have to allow this power through court minutes or policy and at any time, the offender, court, Parole Board, or the Probation & Parole Officer could request a revocation hearing rather than sanction time. This is modeled after the HOPE program in Hawaii, which has proven very successful in reducing revocations through swift and sure sanctions. Use of these sanctions would be tied to a performance grid. Probation & Parole Officers are currently undergoing training and implementing use of this grid. The grid would limit when and how much jail time could be imposed by the officer.

- The Parole and Pardons workgroup noted that a recent cost benefit analysis of the Risk Review Panel found it has not been cost effective. This team is exploring how other states may have made such panels more effective and support the administrative sanction legislation proposed by the previous workgroup. This workgroup also proposed adding the warden or deputy warden of the institution housing the offender as an *ex officio* member of the Pardon Board. This is similar to legislation from last session adding them as *ex officio* members of the Parole Board.
- Legislation was proposed changing the timing of parole eligibility for non-violent, non-sex offenders otherwise eligible for parole such that first or second offenders would be eligible after serving 25% of their sentence and third or subsequent would be eligible after serving 50% of the sentence. This is due to the fact that many offenders in this category are released on "good time" supervision before their parole eligibility date or within so short a timeframe that the Parole Board's rules prohibit them from considering them for parole. It was modeled on similar legislation in Mississippi and requires an assessment using a valid risk assessment tool.
- Legislation was proposed requiring Parole Board members to undergo 8 hours of annual training funded by the DPS&C and consistent with the National Institute of Corrections and American Probation & Parole Officers Association. It also requires the development and mandatory use by the Board of risk and needs assessment tool in making parole decisions and to make an annual report to the DPS&C and legislature of the Parole Board plan.
- The Infirm/Medical Parole workgroup proposed legislation to permit medical parole by a 2/3 vote upon referral by the DPS&C for consideration when certain specific criteria are met. These criteria are set forth in the legislation and require the offender to be permanently incapacitated, terminally ill, have a significantly reduced life expectancy, or have an extraordinary health condition. These terms are defined in the legislation and if the offender recovers and no longer is deemed to fall into one of these categories, he or she must return to prison for the duration of the sentence.
- The Home Incarceration team proposed legislation to require providers of home incarceration to report to the court, sheriff, and DOC monthly and annually regarding: qualifications and program description; offenders and offenses under supervision; number of defendants that successfully complete, and a determination on individuals on home incarceration having been tried and/or convicted if home incarceration was used or if it was done as part of a deferred sentence. This is because the Sentencing Commission needs to gather data on who is using this statute (courts, providers, and defendants) and how is it being used in order to determine how best to amend the statute to make good use of this option.
- The Good Time/Uniform Sentencing workgroup proposed legislation that would "clean up" the many statutes allowing offenders to earn good time at different rates and allow them to earn good time at simplified rates, if eligible to earn good time. Non-violent/non-sex offenders would earn at one rate and violent/sex offenders eligible to earn good time would earn it at another rate. This would be prospective and make it easier to calculate time. It would allow courts, prosecutors, and attorneys to better understand the likely period of actual jail time the offender would serve. Proposed legislation would create a Uniform Sentencing Commitment Order that could be used by DPS&C records analysts to calculate time. Currently, records analysts must await certified court minutes from the Clerk of Court's office, which can take as long as 3 months. This results in offenders often being eligible for immediate release and delays in processing offenders into the DPS&C system. This order would be submitted from the court directly to the Clerk of Court, who must then submit it within 30 days to the records analysts, thus reducing delays.

- The Research and Technology workgroup proposed legislation authorizing the Sentencing Commission to request and collect data from other agencies in order to perform its functions. This legislation is modeled after similar law that allows other agencies, such as the LA Commission on Law Enforcement, to collect data. This group will also work to determine whether it is feasible to perform a risk assessment on all state offenders in jails or prisons in Louisiana. Associated hurdles such as staff needs, training, costs, etc. will be analyzed. The DPS&C is currently piloting the use of our LARNA risk/needs instrument at two local jails to determine the impact of its use.