

Reentry Advisory Council and Workforce Development Meeting Minutes

COUNCIL MEETING – Thursday, December 11, 2014

The meeting was called to order 9:45 a.m. at DPS&C Headquarters in Baton Rouge by Assistant Secretary Whalen Gibbs.

Introduction and Determination of Quorum

Attendees Present:

Secretary James Le Blanc, Dept. of Public Safety & Corrections
Leila Miller, Dept. of Health & Hospitals, Designee
Jean Groh, Dept. of Children and Family Services, Designee
Senator Elbert Guillory, State Senate
Charles Habig, AFL-CIO, Designee
Joseph Ardoin, LA State Building Construction Trade Council

Absent:

Curt Eysink, LA Workforce Commission
Dr. Monty Sullivan, LA Community & Technical College System
Representative Steven Pylant, House of Representatives
Mike Cazes, LA Sheriff's Association
Dale Le Blanc, LA Association of Builders & Contractors
James Landry, LA Association of Business & Industry

Others:

Kevin Bradley, New Iberia Parish
Vera Bradley, CAPARC
Ashley Campbell, Cap Area Reentry
David S. Cressy, Courts
Raymond Delaney, LACOR
Elaine Ellebee, PCDCR
Scott Huffman, CAPARC
Rhonda Irving, CAPARC
W. Eric Johnson, T.C. Ministries
Minister Wilford Johnson, Care Program, New Iberia Parish
Robert Lancaster, LSU Padre & Reentry Clinic
LaTonya Malveaux, Courts
Cory Sparks, LANO
Pastor Shawn Watson,
Perry J. Williams, New Iberia Parish
Joshua Wurlson, CAPARC
Checo Yancy, CAPARC
Ann D. Zanders, BRCC

Dept. of Public Safety & Corrections Headquarters Staff:

Assistant Secretary Whalen Gibbs, Dept. of Public Safety & Corrections, Designee

Deputy Assistant Secretary Rhett Covington, Dept. of Public Safety & Corrections, Designee

Tammy Jetson, Office of Offender Reentry

Gretchen McCarstle, Office of Offender Reentry

Welcome

- Secretary Gibbs opened the meeting by explaining how the Reentry Advisory Council (RAC) was established for visiting guests:
 - RAC has been in existence since 2008;
 - RAC was initially called Work Force Development Advisory Council;
 - RAC was established to identify obstacles to reentry;
 - Second-Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Program for Planning and Demonstration Projects FY 2011 partnered with Tulane University to provide RAC with a five (5) year strategic plan.
- Assistant Secretary Gibbs turned the meeting over to Secretary Le Blanc for comments;
- Secretary Le Blanc addressed the Council and guests by stating the following:
 - Department moving in the right direction with the Government Efficiency Management System (GEMS) project;
 - GEMS is an investment to reduce the funding at the local level;
 - Five to six million dollars are being invested into the Regional Reentry Centers and Day Reporting Centers;
 - Rhett Covington will be taking Asst. Secretary Gibbs' place and is confident he will do a great job;
 - Over the last 20 months, the prison population has dropped by 2,046;
 - Department still has 6,200 more to go in order to be second in the nation in incarceration per capita;
 - Department is headed in the right direction with the Behavioral Management groups, help from the community and other state agencies;
 - Community engagement makes a big difference when it comes to an offender's reentry into society successfully;
 - Violent crimes are at their peak;
 - Louisiana is in the Top 10 for crime rate, but the crime rate is declining faster in Louisiana than it is over the country;
 - Department is focusing on programs at the local level in the local prisons, where the offenders need the most attention;
 - Department has to understand where the Sheriffs are with the prison population going down. Sheriffs have built facilities at the local level to help with the department's issue with housing prisoners;
 - Department going forward with the GEMS project but also looking at how to help the Sheriffs make it;

- Sheriff per diems has not been increased in many years, and a higher per diem may be a way to help make up the difference as the Department reduces the number of beds at the local level;
- Offenders ideally need to be moved out of smaller local jails and into bigger facilities that have reentry programs and transition specialists so they can receive the programming and other things they need;
- Dennis Schrantz, former Deputy Secretary in Michigan, is helping the Department create a blueprint on how we need to proceed moving forward which deals with risk assessments and structured case planning;
- Department's current risk assessment is good to use at the front end, but it needs to be more sophisticated in identifying offender criminogenetic needs;
- Currently, about 50% of prison intake results from parole and/or probation revocations;
- Probation and parole agents must balance case management and law enforcement. They have to be capable of doing both jobs and access to more tools is going to make their jobs easier;
- Resources in the community to help returning offenders are key to moving forward;
- Department is working on making official certification through the Technical College System for offenders completing the Reentry Court Program at Angola;
- Discussion with Warden Cain on possibility of having lifers or offenders who have changed their lives be missionaries in education and implementing the certification at the local level;
- Discussion by the RAC on assisting offenders with a pay schedule on repayment of child support arrearage is an important discussion with Children and Family Services;
- Department needs to educate the public on the transitional work programs;
- Transitional work programs consist of providing room and board for an offender, food, medical care, job assistance, on-the-job training, etc.;
- Reinvestment in law enforcement and public safety is being done by the Sheriffs who have transitional work programs;
- The number of offenders in transitional work programs is down by 400 since last year. The Department should have 3,600 in programs but currently has 3,200;
- Invitations to Senator Murray and Senator Toliver will be extended for a visit and/or tour so they will have a better understanding of our transitional work programs;
- Department is well into the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) and is looking to having RAC more involved;
- Justice Reinvestment Initiative Committee under the Sentencing Commission previously oversaw the JRI but will now be incorporated into the RAC as a mechanism to get RAC more involved;
- Senator Guillory has been an asset to the Department with several different legislative bills;

- Workforce Development Transitional Work Program at Dequincy has started and is ongoing;
- Senator Guillory stated that Louisiana is No. 1 in the nation with working on and solving the reentry problems

Approval of Minutes

- Motion made by Joseph M. “T-Boy” Ardoin, Jr., to approve the minutes from July 10, 2014 board meeting
- Seconded by Charles Habig

Reports:

- *Re-entry Alliance in Louisiana (REAL) Help Conference Summary*
 - REAL Help Conference will be an annual statewide conference for reentry to help RAC and local coalitions throughout the State come together, network, become better organized, share best practices, and bring new ideas on moving forward;
 - James Windom reported that the conference was held to make sure there are no pockets in the State where the recidivism rate is high and no programs are in place to reduce recidivism;
 - Corey Sparks reported approximately 130 people attended the conference;
 - The REAL Help Conference steering committee is working on next year’s conference, which will be in November in New Orleans;
 - RAC was asked to attend next year’s conference along with Voices of the Returned Citizens;
 - Corey Sparks asked for suggestion on speakers for next year’s conference
 - Vision of the conference is to see returning citizens succeed and be able to find the resources they need to lead productive crime-free lives;
 - Communication break-out session: One key factor moving forward is to build on the reentry alliances’ website and to make sure there is access to webinar;
 - Communication Task Force will be built around social media;
 - Task force has created a Facebook page that focuses on public service announcements and other strategies on relaying messages to the public;
 - Advocacy break-out session: discussed important inroads that need to be made with legislators on the challenges we face moving forward;
 - Representative Pat Smith and Representative Frank Hoffman attended the conference
 - Advocacy work will be held during the upcoming legislative session;
 - Possible reentry day at the Legislature to identify those champions of reentry, to move forward and obtain the resources needed to make a difference in Louisiana;
 - Policy break-out session: Begin with evidence based practices where RAC has significant strategic focus on clothing and policies;
 - Task force discussed how to get offenders into the jobs they need to support themselves, family, and pay child support arrearage;

- Secretary Le Blanc suggested new faces attend these conferences who aren't familiar with evidence-based practices;
- ***Certificate of Rehabilitation***
 - Suggestion made to look into creating a Certificate of Rehabilitation for offenders to receive upon release stating they did the right things and deserve a second chance;
 - Policy advisors at the Governor's office also looking into creating a Certificate of Rehabilitation;
 - 100 beds will be added to an existing facility in the Southwest region to house female offenders;
 - Suggestion was made asking that the community organization keep records of their success stories and other data to be given to the community showing that the offenders returning back to society are good citizens and able to do good work;

Business:

- ***Council membership and appointment discussion***
 - Nominee needed from LABI;
 - Louis Reine need to be confirmed through the Governor's office for the AFL-CIO;
 - Nominee needed from the Louisiana Chaplain Association;
 - Vacancies need to be filled on the RAC membership;
 - Senator Guillory suggested permanent membership for a judge and a district attorney;
 - Suggestion for membership – a representatives from the Voices of the Returning Citizens and Victim's advocacy group;
 - Legislation is needed to have those memberships added to the Council;
 - Suggestion on widening the position for the La Chaplain's Association membership to include anyone from the faith-based community;

- ***Justice Reinvestment Initiative: Maximizing State Reforms Grant Overview and Discussion***
 - Louisiana is the recipient of the Maximizing State Reforms Grant;
 - Focus on creation of a more modernized risk need/responsivity tool;
 - Identifying risk, needs and barriers returning citizens are facing and what they need help with;
 - Taking best practices from across the U.S. and automating it in the Department of Corrections' system
 - Making the tool available through web-based for sentencing courts, Board of Pardons and Parole, sheriff partners, and some community partners;
 - Goal to have everyone working together using the same tool

- ***Justice Reinvestment Oversight Committee***
 - Grant is a three (3)-year program;
 - Committee consists of a group of stakeholders at the Executive level;
 - Possibly having a larger group of stakeholders to include membership from further within the Department from all elements, local jails, etc.;
 - Discussion of what elements of the tool would be effective;
 - Council will be updated on the progress of the grant.

- ***Social Impact Bonds “Pay for Success”***
 - Oklahoma passed a Pay for Success Revolving Fund legislation;
 - Created a fund to be used for “pay for success” or social impact bonds;
 - Entity applying would be entering into an agreement saying they would like to see a reentry project of this type being done;
 - Funded by an organization(s) from the community partner and private funders who agree to solicit a grant application to provide those services with designated outcomes and deliverables;
 - If they are met during the course of the grant, the State reimburses the private funders;
 - If they are not met during the course of the grant, the State does not reimburse the private funders;
 - State is only paying for programs that meet their expectations and not for programs that promise a lot and don’t deliver;
 - Fund could be used for workforce training development;
 - Suggestion to look into possible legislation;
 - Senator Guillory will add to list of legislation that needs be taken care of in the upcoming legislative session;
 - Suggestion of possibly looking into a Creative Entrepreneurial Project;
 - Suggestion to develop a Senate Resolution/House Resolution to conduct study and report to Secretary Le Blanc;
 - Suggestion for partners to keep track of their programs and data possibly to be used in the future in regards to data reporting centers

- **Other business**
 - None

- **Adjournment**
 - Meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.