

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
Behavioral Health Subcommittee
DRAFT Meeting Summary for September 21, 2020

1. Call To Order

Committee discussion began at 2:31 p.m., When a quorum of members arrived, Committee Co-Chair Dan Hammill called the meeting to order at 2:36 p.m. The meeting was a remote-only virtual Zoom webinar.

Members Present: Megan Ballew, Doug Chadwick, Arlene Feld, Seth Fleetwood, Heather Flaherty, Stephen Gockley, Dan Hammill, Mike Hilley, Byron Manering, Mike Parker

Members Absent: Nathan Bajema and Perry Mowery

2. Agency needs for changes due to Covid

Committee members spoke briefly about challenges and changes they are experiencing within their organization due to the Covid19 pandemic.

3. Expanding committee representation

The committee members discussed:

- The need for more diversity on the committee and the importance of hearing from a variety of voices, including those with lived experience in the criminal justice system and under-represented communities
- Creating a more inviting meeting format
- A public meeting in which people in the community testified about the need for mental health services
- Trauma resulting from a lack of available services
- Possibly including a recent graduate of the drug court program
- Meeting individually with prospective new voices to make them feel comfortable participating

Flaherty and Ballew stated they will work on options and present information at the next meeting.

4. Communications Planning

The committee members discussed:

- The need for the Task Force and its committees to have better outward-facing communication on the work they are doing
- Broadcasting recordings on BTV and/or YouTube
- Posting video instead of audio

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- Time notations on the meeting summaries, agendas, and other content
- Live transcription services
- The possibility of hiring someone to develop a communications campaign
- Advertising the work of the Task Force versus making the meetings more accessible to the public
- Each committee member communicating themselves with the community
- Having periodic meetings with the community to talk about the work of the Task Force and allow them to provide input on those efforts

Hammill will report to the committee at its next meeting about discussions at Steering Committee.

5. Racial Equity Toolkit

Parker gave a presentation on the need for a racial equity toolkit, such as the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) toolkit.

The committee members discussed:

- Next steps, such as determining how to adopt and use the toolkit
- Asking the GARE questions throughout every process they do
- Presentations to the committees, and Steering Committee recommendation to the full Task Force, which could formally adopt the use of this or another framework by the Task Force and its committees
- The importance of being specific about how, when, and under what circumstances the toolkit is used
- Whatcom County potentially becoming a member of GARE
- Running existing programs through the toolkit questions and evaluating new programs with the toolkit questions

Parker stated he will continue to give this presentation to the other IPRTF committees.

6. Other Business

Flaherty stated she would like to give an update to the committee on the her work.

Hammill and Fleetwood reported that the Bellingham City Council directed its administration to come up with funds to develop a 9-1-1 co-responder program to divert behavioral health calls to behavioral health responders instead of law enforcement.

The committee discussed

- Using the existing Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) structure for behavioral health crisis response,

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- The need for those services 24/7
- The lack of available resources
- Creating crisis response teams where each team consists of a law enforcement officer, community paramedic, and a behavioral health clinician, and the appropriate team member would take the lead on response, depending on the needs of the caller

7. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:47 p.m.

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