

## ***Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force / Law & Justice Council Meeting Summary May 17, 2021***

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### **1. Call to Order**

Task Force Co-Chairs Jack Hovenier called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

**Present:** Barry Buchanan, Anne Deacon, Bill Elfo, Arlene Feld, Heather Flaherty, Seth Fleetwood, Stephen Gockley, Jack Hovenier, Raylene King, Scott Korthuis, Moonwater, Darlene Peterson, Dave Reynolds, Donnell Tanksley, Maia Vanyo

**Absent:** David Freeman, Daniel Hammill, Deborah Hawley, Mike Hilley, Byron Manering, Eric Petersen, Eric Richey, Tyler Schroeder, Flo Simon, Bruce Van Glubt, Greg Winter

### **2. [Committee Reports \(00:04:57\)](#)**

Feld and King briefly reported for the joint meeting between the Behavioral Health and Legal and Justice Systems Committees on reentry.

Anne Deacon presented the Crisis Stabilization Facility graphics presentation and described the facility. They are now developing metrics to document diversion and impacts of the diversion on the criminal justice system. They have 24/7 nursing. No one needs to go to the emergency department first. The detox unit is fully operational and capacity is full. The mental health unit is hiring and training more staff to get it fully used. Ten people are admitted right now. Additional funding will help achieve involuntary status by allowing them to hire staff for that service. The mental health workforce isn't adequate for the demand right now. They must recertify the Compass Health program as a triage facility with involuntary placement, which will allow law enforcement to place someone there as needed instead of the jail for up to 12 hours. The majority of the guests will always be voluntary. The State will have data collection requirements, and they'll add their own data collection requirements locally.

Task Force members discussed the benefits of the new facility, an improved kitchen area from the old facility; medical screening and whether it's necessary to take someone to the hospital before admission; training for law enforcement drop-off, and; the struggle to have an adequate number of providers; quantifying the financial benefits of diversion.

Buchanan read from and reported for the Steering Committee.

### **3. [Report on plans for INDEX Committee \(00:01:24\)](#)**

Hovenier reported that the next Task Force meeting in June will have a broad discussion about INDEX Committee about what it can and can't do and its challenges. There are a variety of challenges facing the committee. For the INDEX Committee to be functional, they must understand what they can do, the barriers, and what are reasonable expectations from the committees.

### **4. [Update on Annual Report \(00:33:24\)](#)**

Jill Nixon, Task Force Clerk, reminded the Task Force members of the report timeline.

### **5. [Updates from Jurisdictions \(00:34:50\)](#)**

Elfo gave an update on navigating changes in statutes and behavioral health deputy response to families or persons in crisis.

Peterson gave update and stated they are also looking at new legislation, including the Blake decision and the Department of Licensing. Driving while license suspended, 3<sup>rd</sup> (DWLS3) will no longer go

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to driver suspension for failure to pay fines, which will help people get their licenses. Jail diversion with bracelets continues to work well. Regarding the new case management system for the courts of limited jurisdiction, the actual case management system, Odyssey, will not be implemented for another three years.

King stated she echoes the comments from Sheriff Elfo and Ms. Peterson. In addition, ticket payment options that courts can opt into for multiple tickets might be able to assist individuals when the law goes into effect. She has questions about the changes to the DWLS3 change and treatment. The City of Lynden, and possibly the City of Ferndale, will soon enter into a contract with Friendship Diversion Services.

Tanksley asked for a tour of the new Crisis Stabilization Center for him and his staff.

Moonwater stated the Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) continues to provide its services online, and is exploring how to transition back to in-person services when that happens. They continue to run the Safe Spaces program, and would like to connect with community partners who can spread the availability of the program. The DRC is an impartial service to work as a liaison between the City of Bellingham and an individual who is not comfortable communication with the City. Also, the DRC is working in coordination with the Opportunity Council, Law Advocates, and Northwest Justice Project in response to Senate Bill 5160 regarding eviction prevention, including legal aid, rental assistance, and dispute resolution.

The Task Force members discussed whether the program will assist landlords as well as tenants.

**6. [Update on Behavioral Health Crisis Response program \(00:41:25\)](#)**

Deacon referenced the presentation in the meeting packet and stated the original request was for a team of non-law enforcement officials to respond to people in crisis. After a series of meetings, they considered how to form a team that would work, but does not duplicate the work of the existing crisis response teams. The dispatch staff at 9-1-1 will code calls a certain way, and law enforcement also codes calls after they respond. There were few calls that began and ended as solely behavioral health calls, but they questioned that information and are researching those calls further. They hope to get a better sense of the nature of the calls and how they can inform dispatch staff, so dispatch staff can safely and confidently send a team that isn't law enforcement. This is a new and unique program, so they must be very careful in collecting and evaluating the data and developing a program that is safe for everyone. In the next phase after data gathering and dispatch is confident in the program, is the implementation phase to send a team that includes an emergency medical technician (EMT) and behavioral health professional, who would be dispatched out of the emergency medical services (EMS). They hope to start with two teams that would work from late morning to early evening. They will likely use the 9-8-8 emergency call line, which will be available next summer. This work requires an exceptionally skilled workforce, so they must hire the right people. Soon they will be talking with and getting feedback from others in the crisis response system, including families and system users.

The Task Force members discussed the timeline of the phases in developing the program; how they will respond to someone who is unstable due to substance use; training for and indemnification of dispatchers; the challenges of implementing the program countywide; crediting the community for their grassroots effort that called for this type of response;

**7. [Update on development of the Racial Equity Commission: May 22 community visioning summit \(01:16:39\)](#)**

Buchanan introduced the effort to develop a racial equity commission and noted the invitation to an upcoming community visioning session.

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Flaherty stated she acknowledges that many others in the community have been leaders on this project. She described her contribution and the history of this effort. They are committed to health equity, which makes sure everyone has the same access to opportunities to be as healthy as possible. Community listening sessions are informing the people working on this effort about difficulty people are experiencing in the community. Local data shows racial disparities in everything they monitor, including education, social services, life expectancy, income disparity, and many other issues. Data is important for understanding the local systems. They need to hear from people with lived experience. The goal is to amplify the voices in the community that aren't always heard and invest in community-driven solutions that will end systemic barriers to health. She described the upcoming community visioning summit and the formation of a stakeholder's group for accountability.

The Task Force discussed a major barrier from lack of transportation for individuals to attend court and court-mandated services; outreaching to people who live outside of Bellingham; bringing resources to people who live in more remote locations in the county; next steps and staying engaged in the process, and; documenting the process of informing and engaging the public in the process.

**8. Other Business**

There was no other business.

**9. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**10. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.