

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force Behavioral Health Committee

Meeting Summary for August 17, 2021

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1. Call to Order

Committee Co-Chair Dan Hammill called the meeting to at 9:00 a.m. The meeting was held via remote-only Zoom Webinar.

Members Present: Nathan Bajema, Doug Chadwick, Chris Cochran, Anne Deacon, Heather Flaherty, Stephen Gockley, Dan Hammill, Byron Manering, Michael G. Smith, Brien Thane

Members Absent: Megan Ballew, Arlene Feld, Seth Fleetwood, Mike Hilley, Mike Parker

2. [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) Fund Investments and Recommendations \(00:34:22\)](#)

Flaherty reported on the request from the County administration to help create priorities for ARPA funding and on the workgroup that drafted the letter in the meeting packet. The goal is to revisit the proposed letter today and recommend sending it to the Task Force for approval to send to the County Council and Executive.

The committee discussed:

- The possibility of a 24/7 mental health emergency center and using ARPA dollars to support a behavioral health urgent care facility or a center to help people who may be falling through the cracks
- Program sustainability and long-term funding after ARPA funds are spent; suggesting one-time investments
- Leveraging other funding sources
- Highlighting the lack of resources for youth
- Recovery house models: investing in the homes and leasing the homes to community services
- Funding from the City of Bellingham
- Dedicated units for the Shelter+Care Program
- Providing options for how to spend the funding without being prescriptive

3. [2021 Committee Priorities \(00:01:09\)](#)

Deacon spoke about the work of the Health Department with the North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization (ASO) on workforce issues. It's an ongoing issue. They're looking at wages, incentivizing tuition, and other ways to get people interested in the program. Locally, they are working with providers. The concern is about overloading or over-investing in one aspect of the continuum of care, so that the rest of the continuum becomes unbalanced.

The committee members discussed how communities are trying to address the challenges with behavioral health response, such as the Ground level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) Program; how well law enforcement is using the new crisis stabilization center; diversion using the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) and Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) programs; challenges in providing response and care due to recent State legislation; the involuntary hold status of the crisis stabilization center; the advisory committee for the center, and; the long-term expectation of involuntary treatment certification as part of the lease agreement.

Hammill reported on the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) representative's presentation to the Steering Committee. He will endeavor to make sure they apply the toolkit to each priority item. The committee discussed the need for data on programs to apply the toolkit.

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Hammill stated that Chris Cochran will provide additional information on item G, Juvenile substance use disorder (SUD) treatment at an upcoming meeting. The committee discussed whether it should be discussed jointly with the Legal and Justice Systems Committee. Get the Legal and Justice System Committee's opinion on the new laws impact on juvenile SUD.

The committee continued to discuss:

- Change in behavioral response calls and having dedicated mental health professionals ride along with law enforcement. It's difficult to get alternative resources in the field in a timely manner. The Sheriff's Office would advocate for that if there is grant funding.
- Program effectiveness, the core charge of the Task Force to evaluate programs, and getting data from programs. Any program the County has includes reporting outcomes. There is a need to do more reporting to the Task Force.
- Barriers to crisis treatment, including Covid testing, and the need for services for folks who are in crisis and need help, but don't meet the requirements for the crisis stabilization center.

4. [Agenda Items for September joint meeting with Legal & Justice Systems Committee \(01:11:42\)](#)

The committee discussed the items proposed for the joint meeting in September.

1. From the Legal and Justice Systems Committee: Domestic Violence Offender Treatment.
2. From today's meeting: Juvenile SUD
3. From today's meeting: the proposed ARPA funding letter
4. From today's meeting: behavioral health ride-along with law enforcement
5. From the Steering Committee: Task Force Communications - Identify 2-5 targeted public relations and communication messages regarding past, current, or future Task Force initiatives

5. **Other Business**

There was no other business.

6. [Public Comment \(01:15:25\)](#)

Mark Gardner, City of Bellingham Legislative Analyst, spoke on the timeline for ARPA funding.

7. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.