

Incarceration Task Force Minutes
May 21, 2008
Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office

Present:

Grayson Robinson (Chair)
Michelle Sykes (TFL)
Tony Carochi, Deputy Director of Prisons (in for Gary Golder)
Norm Mueller, Defense Attorney
Pam Clifton, CCJRC
Glen Tapia, DCJ
Shelby McKenzie, CU graduate student
Debbie Zwirn, Logan County Commissioner
Rhonda Fields, victim's advocate
Christine Adams, staff
Germaine Miera, staff

Absent:

John Suthers, Attorney General
Gary Golder, DOC
Bill Lovingier, Denver jail

Data:

Discussion Topics:

Review of Charter-

- The Task Force was put together two weeks ago after the commission decided this was the direction for the Re-Entry Subcommittee.
- Director Weir and the rest of the commission want a report by 20th of August. We need to keep a tight timeline to get us moving.
- The legislative report is a driving factor in the timeline for a report.
- The Sheriff's office and DCJ are here to provide as much data and information as possible.
- Christine handed out 'Confronting Confinement' and copies of 'What Works'.
- We will communicate via email. Documents will be made available electronically. Sheriff Grayson has an in-house print shop if we need.
- Charter accepted by all.

Review of Commission-

- Focussing currently on adult rather than juvenile issues.
- We gather at NETI and everyone is welcome
- The commission has some mandates based on statute. Most recent mandate is to also include issues of minority over-representation.

Commission focused on reduction of recidivism impacting the system.
Public Safety must be paramount.

Grayson recommends reading - 'Confronting Confinement' – gives nice perspective on incarceration in jails and prisons. Overcrowding is one of the most significant issues. Also, What Works is a great document that covers a variety of issues. Grays distribute to all of his judges. Contact us for any reading materials that you need.

Areas of Expertise

Grayson Robinson-

Grayson said he is honored to be a commission member.
Talk is cheap in the criminal justice system these days and would like to see some action.
Expressed frustration with the system a lot. We seem to be doing the same things we did 30-years ago in some areas.
Grayson says he's proud of their (Arapahoe County) jail. He says it is accredited and he takes 'Best Practices' very seriously.
Grayson is frustration with recidivism and jail and prison overcrowding.
There are a large number of inmates with mental health issues and they contribute significantly to the jail overcrowding issue.
Mental health intervention is really important to Grayson.
The same people are recycling through the jail doors over and over.
He's also very concerned about early childhood prevention and education.
In the jail they don't have inmates long enough to do real meaningful education.
He'd like to see some large Community Corrections facilities and large MH facilities rather than bigger and more jails.
Grayson says he's not a traditional law enforcement officer. Would rather do something different and something innovative and would really like to see some change.
He represents all of the sheriffs in the state of Colorado.

Michelle Sykes-

Was victimized when younger by her then husband, in the course of that wrote bad checks and was getting drugs for him.
Wrote \$1200 worth of bad checks, convicted of forgery and sentenced to 16 years.
She believes there is definite disproportionate female minority over-representation.
She's the only female who ever received her bachelor's degree while in DOC.
Served more than 5 years of her sentence.
She had a 2 year old child when she went into DOC.

Tony Carochi-

Deputy Director of Prisons. Worked for the dept. for 24 years. Started as a substance abuse counselor at a maximum security facility. Became a correctional officer, assoc. warden, warden and now supervises wardens. He was also the associate warden at YOS. He says his experience at YOS showed him how much really strong programming can help. He also thinks boot camp shows strong success.

He says so much happens in DOC that people aren't aware of, degrees offered, etc.
Tony supervises the academic and educational programs at DOC.
He talked about the 16 re-integration specialists coming back into the facilities.
DOC is the 3rd highest graduator of GED's in Colorado.
He thinks it is exciting that the Governor is concerned on focusing on people before they get into the system.
He also talked about the Dairy program, heavy equipment and how all the specialty programs depend a lot on space available, location and of course dollars.

Norm Mueller-

Norm says he started out as a Public Defender years ago. He's now in private practice and has done lots of trial work and appeals. He believes rehabilitation was a much bigger focus back in the 70's. He believes lots of innocent people are going to prison because people are taking please that they shouldn't take.
Would like to see truth in sentencing.
The sex offender system is 'one size fits all' and it's not working.
This country is leading the world in incarceration. We have the resources to do it right, resources to do it better.

Pam Clifton-

Pam is an advocate for people while their inside DOC.
She helps them figure out their issues prior to, during and after incarceration to make sure transition issues can be addressed.
Her organization wrote 'Parenting from prison' plus the GO book 'Getting on after Getting out'. 27,000 issues of the GO book have been distributed. Every prison and parole office has copies.
She says a lot of people just don't know how to get through the system and come out successfully.
Her focus is on figuring out where the crisis happened in offenders lives, protect them where they can from communities, families, prisons.
She is concerned about mental health issues surrounding offenders and co-occurring disorders and substance abuse issues.
She aims to help offenders without being parental.
Pam believes cognitive behavioral work is best thing that has happened in prisons.

Glen Tapia-

Has expertise in risk assessments, inter-agency work with treatment programs for offenders and is an overall good generalist when it comes to Community Corrections.
He has a strong interest in the Task Force and platform issues.
He believes there is a big disconnect between policy and practice and fidelity to program standards.
He also believes there are issues of overlap between treatment provided in DOC, Community Corrections and Parole.
He says what really happens in the field is that offenders are exposed to pieces of treatment and not a full program.

Shelby McKenzie-
CU graduate student

Debbie Zwirn-

Deb says she is very excited to be here.

She talked about report card on Colorado. Colorado ranked 50 out of 50.

Let's make some changes and recommendations.

She has a parole officer friend who wants to see her clients succeed and thinks that attitude is how it should be.

She wants to look at vocational rehab and what is available in prisons.

Martin Stuart-

Martin is on the board of directors for the CCDB.

He is in private practice now but stated as a Public Defender.

He's a conduit between the criminal defense bar and Task Force.

He has lots of connections with PD's office.

Martin sees a lot on the ground level and believes mandatory minimums and mandatory sentences are the biggest problem.

He does lots of work with sex offenders.

Rhonda Fields-

Victim advocate joins the group a little late.

No background in criminal justice, considers herself an "average citizen".

Says she brings the voice of a victim to this Task Force.

Rhonda is in the middle of a case and wants to see justice in her case. Rhonda feels like she's better at trying to be at the front end of trying to get to someone before they get into the criminal justice system.

Discussion Topics (cont.):

Inmates with mental health issues are a big concern for everyone

Policy change in the bonding arena – Norm

The group wants to have the biggest impact on recidivism while keeping public safety at the forefront.

Where can we really make an impact?

Expectations

- Prioritize for biggest impact
- Reduce incarceration without risking public safety
- Make sure we give the Governor political cover
- Prepare inmate while incarcerated to become a successful parolee
- Accelerate jail terms so inmates don't move to DOC
- Jail vs. Prison - how do we address the issues that face these different populations

- Fix and identify the disconnect between DOC and Comm Corr, etc. Limit discussion to gaps around issues and concepts
- Broad brush concepts for Phase 1
- Over representation of African Americans
- Early intervention, education, employment
- Sentencing Scheme – mandatory minimums, consecutive sentences., get back to some discretion
- Phased approach to treatment by crime type
- MH services/substance abuse services
- Family/Human contact
- Gang members
- Sex offender treatment

Legislation:

Next Agenda:

- 1-Overview of programs in both prisons and jails, everything from vocational training to education and treatment
- 2-Prioritize and agree on issues
- 3-Ideas on process piece on how to get to work product

Next meeting at the Arapahoe County Sheriff's office

Miscellaneous:

Rhonda – feels a little out of the criminal justice 'loop' and would like a Glossary 101

Pam – Bridge Building between DOC and all others

Glenn – How do we distinguish the ones who should be in prison and the ones that can actually rehabilitate. We cannot victimize the weak that are in prison.

Michelle – represent the young African American males that we miss.

Rhonda – phased approach in Philadelphia.