

Transition Task Force

Date: July 24, 2008, 3:00 – 6:00pm

Attendees:

Regi Huerter, Manager of Denver Public Safety/Substitute Chair
Louise Boris, Task Force Leader/Homeless Coalition
Germaine Miera , Facilitator/DCJ

Mike Biggio, The F.R.E.E. Coalition
Dean Conder, Juvenile Parole Board
Kim English, DCJ
Kevin Ford, Research/DCJ/Staff
Brian Gomez, DOC
Gregg Kildow, Community Corrections
Bridget Klauber, Defense Attorney
Mike Maddox, The F.R.E.E. Coalition
Greg Mauro, Community Corrections
Sean McDermott, Defense Attorney
Shelby McKinzey, CU student
Carol Peeples, Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition
Don Quick, District Attorney
Charlie Smith, Division of Mental Health

Absent:

Lou Archuleta, DOC
Regis Groff, Chair/State Senator (ret.)
Paul Herman, Consultant
Reo Leslie, Mental Health Treatment Provider
Keith Penry, Douglas County Sheriff

Issue/Topic:

Updates/Assignments from last meeting:

A. Interest charges (Carol Peeples)

B. IDs (Carol Peeples)

C. WIA/Wagner-Peyser (Dean Condor)

Actions:

RECOMMENDATION?:

Names should be more easily corrected in the justice system.

RECOMMENDATION?:

Create fidelity bond/tax credit flyer or card for applicants to give potential employers.

Discussion:

Updates since Previous Meeting

A. Interest charges (Carol Peeples)

- It appears that the 12% interest on fees owed by offenders is never being charged while they are incarcerated (according to Greg Mecham at Central Collections). It seems the statute is being ignored.
- Victims are losing this interest on the money they are due in restitution fees when there is the delay in repayment due to incarceration.
- Why was the interest question asked when it is moot? RESPONSE: It was not known to be moot until the answer to the question was provided.

B. IDs (Carol Peeples)

- Still working on the issue. An appointment with the director of licensing is scheduled soon.
- Looking at MoUs regarding licensing requirements. KS, MI, MO, OR, RI, WA require a birth certificate and SSN
- The way the Dept. of Revenue is implementing the 2003 Secure and Verifiable Identity Documents Act (HB 1224) is “interesting.”
- Some states appear to have a more cooperative approach to wade through the alias problem.
- Denver MoU holds requests for birth certificates from other states, requiring 2 pieces of identification. This is a difficult standard for those with no ID.
- How many people in the system have aliases? Answer: How many people in the system DON’T have an alias?
- Reference made to pilot programs at Skyline and Canyon Minimum. If these work well, it will be expanded. “Working” defined as getting good cooperation from The Dept. of Revenue.

C. WIA/Wagner-Peyser (Dean Condor)

- Contact on vacation. Will get more information later.
- Mention made of the Federal (fidelity) bond (\$5,000-\$25,000) and the WIA tax credit for those released within previous 12 months.
- The applicant requests the bond when there is a firm job offer. The FREE coalition offers to do all the application paperwork for businesses willing to hire.
- Although the documentation (for Federal bond and WIA tax credit) is in the “Go Guide,” maybe some other form of education for employers is necessary.

Issue/Topic:

Updates/Assignments from last meeting (cont'd):

D. Unemployment rates

Actions:

RECOMMENDATION?:

Employment/unemployment rates and under-employment should be tracked.

RECOMMENDATION?:

Programs or interventions to enhance math proficiency are advantageous to employment.

OVER-ARCHING?:

Issue of comprehensive re-entry assessments.

Discussion:

D. Unemployment rates

Community Corrections – Employment rate at 83.5% at time of discharge, but there are additional ways of splitting the rate depending on the discharge type.

70% - Transfer to lower level of supervision

60% - Escape

80% - New crime

66% - Technical violation

Probation – No report

Parole – No report

Comments

- When recommending the tracking of employment/unemployment, there must be acknowledgement of the many reasons for unemployment (disability, co-occurring disorders, traumatic brain injury, cognitive [processing] disorders, PTSD, substance abuse, etc.)
- Many employers post jobs with requirement that applicant cannot have a felony record.
- Harder for women to find employment?
- Construction work can be a problematic placement due to the difficulties with job verification (e.g., changing job sites, no way to communicate with some job sites)
- There are companies that will clean-up/simplify one's background/record check
- A higher per diem can lead to greater participation more quickly (Independence House and CMI offered as examples).
- Math skills are extremely important for many skilled trades. Can sample skills tests from trades be acquired?
- Are re-entry assessments comprehensive enough to indicate employability and skills?

Issue/Topic:

Social Support Needs

Actions:

RECOMMENDATION?:

Identify/create orientation and curriculum to prepare families for re-integration.

RECOMMENDATION?:

Explore models and related philosophies of parole supervision.

RECOMMENDATION?:

Increase the dollars directed to programs rather than to incarceration.

RECOMMENDATION?:

Gather information from other states regarding their programs and supports for re-entry.

Discussion:

Discussion of Social Support Needs

MENTORING: Create funding streams to go to neighborhood organizations to provide mentoring.

COMMENTS

- A “tracker” in the Dept. of Youth Corrections connects kids to positive activities. Such a thing would be a great idea for adults (in addition to a Parole officer).
- Peer support is available for those with mental illness and can be paid with Medicare funds.

FAMILY: Create support (educational, therapeutic) for families who are preparing for the return of their paroled family member.

COMMENTS

- Families can play an essential role in the transition of the parolee back to the community.
- Family participation can be rather onerous due to the parole rules and restrictions
- Are there regulations that could be altered to make it easier for families to be the soft landing site for the parolee?
- What would parole officers think?
- Are there meetings for family members in DOC to prep them for the re-entry and reintegration of the parolee into the family and community? (Such meetings are mandatory in the Juvenile system).
- The re-integration process may require a therapeutic context.
- This holistic approach to re-integration (“trackers” from above discussion coupled with greater family support) may be jibe well with the typical philosophy of parole and parole officers. The current philosophy is one of surveillance and enforcement (i.e., “trail, nail, and jail”).
- How would a more supportive model fit with the current parole philosophy? What would have to change?
- Joint DOC/Parole pre-release planning. Maybe a new kind of parole officer is needed? More a case management, if the case loads were kept low.
- Chicken/Egg problem: Need more programs to reduce recidivism which would free up dollars to create the supervision programs that would reduce recidivism.
- Carol Peeples mentions Washington State Senate Bill 6157 with details relevant to the task force. (Link sent to task force members: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2007-08/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/6157-S.PL.pdf>) Bill summary: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/pub/BillInfo/2007-08/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/Senate/6157.SBR.pdf>
- There may also be good ideas from other states, like NC and NY.

Issue/Topic:

Social Support Needs (cont'd)

RECOMMENDATION?:

Identify ways for those in Comm. Corrections and those on parole to have access to health and fitness facilities and to encourage health and fitness opportunities.

Discussion:

Discussion of Social Support Needs (Cont'd)

RECREATION/LEISURE: The role of recreation and leisure in the success of the parolee should not be minimized.

COMMENTS

- At re-entry there is a loss of access to the type of leisure and recreation facilities that were available during incarceration.
- Some Community Corrections housing units have recreation and leisure facilities and some do not.
- There might be a drop in positive UAs with recreation access.
- Fitness is an important in the reduction of and ability to cope with stress and in the maintenance of good health.

FAITH-BASED PROGRAMS.

Not enough time to discuss this social support avenue. Return to the topic at a later time?

Issue/Topic:

Survival Recommendations

Actions:

Review the civil forfeiture laws
(Bridget Klauber)

Discussion:**Discussion of potential recommendations for each of the survival recommendations.**

Germaine provided a summary list of 3-4 of the most commonly mentioned recommendations. Members were asked for any additional recommendations to amend the list.

EMPLOYMENT

1. Flexible parole meeting days and times (including UA/BA submission).
2. Education of employers of the incentives to hire parolees.
3. More market-relevant job skills development through the work programs available at DOC.

COMMENTS

- Too much time is wasted waiting for brief parole appointments and UA submission putting employment at risk. (#1)
- Suggestion that the Dept. of Labor and Vocational Rehabilitation be recruited in the effort to inform employers about parolee hiring advantages (fidelity bond and tax incentive). (#2)
- Math and resume construction skills should be included in the development of relevant job skills. (#3)

HOUSING

1. Vouchers.
2. Incentives for landlords and developers.
3. Review / revise the "association rules" for parolees.
4. Address the issue of paroling to homelessness.
5. Address the "hard-to-place" parolee (e.g., sex offenders)
6. Require counties to conduct an inventory of available services

COMMENTS

- Provide non-HUD dollars to support vouchers. (#1)
- Landlords feel at risk due to civil forfeiture laws. (#2)
- Provide a housing bond (similar to the fidelity bond for employment. (#2)
- Consistency and parole officer training are important. (#3)
- If one is homeless, the release should be to Community Corrections. This would be a change to Parole Board protocol. (#4)
- There should be a change in the acceptance criteria by Community Corrections boards to take homeless parolees. (#4)
- These changes will result in an increase of discretionary parole via Community Corrections. (#4)
- Extend housing options beyond transition housing. (#5)
- See the Washington Senate Bill 6157 for provisions. (#6)

Issue/Topic:

Survival Recommendations
(cont'd)

Actions:

Carol Peeples will work on crafting the language of the "Release Money – Voucher System" recommendation.

Discussion:

Discussion of potential recommendations for each of the survival recommendations. (CONT'D)

Germaine provided a summary list of 3-4 of the most commonly mentioned recommendations. Members were asked for any additional recommendations to amend the list.

IDs

1. Start the ID process at intake
2. Stop destruction of any valid ID
3. Coordinate with Dept. of Revenue and other agencies that are currently working on this issue.
4. Explore the possibility of granting offenders a 'red license' for work in lieu of taking a license away entirely.
5. Allow changes/corrections to reflect an offender's real name.

COMMENTS

RELEASE MONEY

1. Create a voucher system based on need
2. Parole inmates one month earlier and put that last 28 days of money that would've paid for their incarceration into re-entry vouchers
3. Re-entry money should not exclude inmates who have been revoked.

COMMENTS

- Pay for one more month at DOC at the rate of \$2500 in vouchers to the parole officers who will direct parolees to appropriate services paid for by the vouchers.
- The current per-month cost of a DOC inmate is "funny money," and can't be simply transferred, but the idea has potential, if recidivism reduction can be demonstrated.
- Those revoked to DOC from parole, for whatever reason, should also qualify for a subsequent release voucher.
- Create a designated recipient list of vendors and service providers where vouchers may be spent.
- Offer a tax incentive to vendors/service providers willing to participate.
- Allow the dollars to go to vendors/services in the community or in Community Corrections.

Carol Peeples will work on crafting the language of this recommendation.

Issue/Topic:

Survival Recommendations
(cont'd)

Actions:

Greg Mauro will work on crafting the language of the recommendation related to #4 Graduate Driving Privileges.

Carol Peeples will work on crafting the language of the "in kind" payment recommendation.

Discussion:

Discussion of potential recommendations for each of the survival recommendations. (CONT'D)

Germaine provided a summary list of 3-4 of the most commonly mentioned recommendations. Members were asked for any additional recommendations to amend the list.

TRANSPORTATION

1. Review the drop-off system offering possible drop-off .
2. Restrictions on driving licenses.
3. Transportation vouchers.
4. Graduated system to allow discretion for driving privileges, with less worry about liability.

COMMENTS

- No more Smith Rd. drop-offs. There was an extensive discussion of potential drop-off locations and drop-off time of day: parole office, community agencies, voucher-supported hotel, DRDC, urban vs. suburban vs. rural access to drop-off points. (#1)
- The voucher system and its flexibility could solve problems related to drop-offs, access to jobs, and parole meetings. (#3)
- Are inmates in Community Corrections driving? There may be some driving illegally. (#4)
- Create a system by which driving can be done legally. (#4)

Greg Mauro will work on crafting the language of the recommendation related to #4 Graduate Driving Privileges.

RESTITUTION, FEES, & COSTS

1. A repayment suspension ("grace period") for fees and costs immediately after release (note: would not apply to restitution or child support).
2. Modify the law replacing the 12% interest charge to an interest rate that would be adjusted yearly based on the prime rate (in case this provision is followed in the future).
3. Explore an option to work off costs ("in kind" payment) (note: would not apply to restitution or child support).

COMMENT

- A grace period would allow parolees to land on their feet and not fall immediately behind on their re-payment schedule.
- Need a cost/benefit analysis of the "in kind" payment option. (#3)
- What percentage of the fees and costs could be "worked off." (#3)

Carol Peeples will work on crafting the language of the "in kind" payment recommendation.

END OF MEETING

Next meeting, Aug. 6, 3-6pm, will be spent fleshing out recommendations.