**Reentry Advisory Council (RAC)**

3rd Quarter 2018 Meeting Minutes

Department of Corrections Headquarters

Thursday, August 30, 2018

**Attendees Present:**

Joseph Ardoin, Jr., LA State Building and Construction Trades Council

Courtney L. Baker, Louisiana Association of Business and Industry

Taryn C. Branson, Proxy for Marketa Garner Walters, Department of Children and Family Services

Amy Cable, Designee for Dr. Monty Sullivan, Louisiana Community and Technical College System

Rhett Covington, Dept of Public Safety and Corrections

Bridget Dinvaut, Louisiana District Attorney’s Association

James T. Dixon, Jr., Louisiana Public Defender Board

Stacye Falgout, Designee for Dr. John Morrison, Department of Public Safety and Corrections

Robert D. Hanser, University of Louisiana at Monroe (Telephone Conference)

Harlen Henegar, Designee for Ava Dejoie, Louisiana Workforce Commission

Jennifer Impastato, Designee for Arthur L. Hunter, Jr., Orleans Criminal District Court

Karissa Page, Designee for Jennifer Katzman, Department of Health

Secretary James Le Blanc, Dept of Public Safety and Corrections

Reverend Paul R. Murray, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center

Joseph Prejean, Big Poppas Fitness Gym

Sheryl Ranatza, Committee on Parole

Nicole Sweazy, Louisiana Housing Corporation

**Absent:**

Michael ‘Mike’ Cazes, Louisiana Sheriff’s Association

Judge Jules D. Edwards, III, 15th Judicial District Court

Daniel R. Martiny, LA Senate

Steve Pylant, LA House of Representatives

Chairman Louis Reine, LA-AFL-CIO

**Other:**

Verna Bradley-Jackson, One Touch Ministry

Joseph Buttross, Prison Enterprises

Kacie Henderson, Prison Enterprises

Keith Nordyke, Louisiana State University

Renard Thomas, VOTE

Ann Zanders, BRCC/REAL

**Dept of Public Safety & Corrections Headquarters Staff:**

Francis Abbott, Board of Pardons and Parole

Rochelle Ambeau, Deputy Assistant Secretary

John Easley, Louisiana State Penitentiary

Nicole George, DPS&C Headquarters

Amanda Mayeux, Office of Offender ReEntry

Malcolm G. Myer, Deputy Secretary

Dr. Henry Sanders, Office of Offender ReEntry

Robert Vehock, Office of Offender ReEntry

**Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order by Assistant Secretary Rhett Covington at 9:41 am.

**Roll Call**

Roll was called and a quorum was established.

**Welcome and Introductions, Rhett S. Covington, Assistant Secretary**

Assistant Secretary Covington welcomed everyone. Everyone in the room introduced themselves.

**Approval of the February and April 2018 Meeting Minutes**

Assistant Secretary Covington entertained a motion to adopt the February and April 2018 minutes. The motion was adopted by Joseph Ardoin, Jr., seconded by Bridget Dinvaut and the minutes were unanimously adopted.

**Opening Remarks, James M. Le Blanc, Secretary**

Secretary James Le Blanc shared information regarding the issue of contraband in correctional facilities. He reported that there have been 28 contraband related arrests of staff members since January at Angola. He also reported that raises for correctional officers have been approved and that the Department has purchased approximately 12 body scanners so that anyone entering a facility will pass through said scanner. He also mentioned that Louisiana’s prison population is at its lowest in 10 years, as well as the fact that the Probation and Parole population is also down by approximately 7,000.

**Justice Reinvestment Implementation Update, James M. Le Blanc**

Secretary Le Blanc reported that he met with the Joint Legislative Committee on Budget and they have unanimously approved the Justice Reinvestment budget. He also reported that the RFP closed on August 23rd and that the evaluation phase has begun. $2.6 million will be invested in the community phase of the RFP. There has been a total of $12.2 million in savings so far. Of that total savings, 70% or $8.4 million of the reinvestment funds will be going back to the Reinvestment part of the budget with 30% going back to the general fund to help fill the gap.

The Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE) has come up with a plan for the reinvestment of victim’s services funds and proposes to establish a Family Justice Center in East Baton Rouge parish at a cost of $750,000, Crime Victims’ Reparation Fund will receive $300,000, they propose to make child predator technology improvements at a cost of $100,000 and create a way for LAVINS to interface with the Clerks of Court at a cost of $300,000.

The Department of Corrections investment a total of $4.27 million involves the following, with $400,000 going to specialty courts, a per diem increase to sheriffs (increase in contract - due to jail consolidation to provide more programming), opening two Day Reporting Centers in Probation and Parole (Monroe and Lafourche), as well as transitional housing at a cost of $370,000.

He also briefly touched on the concerns regarding budget cuts and the loss of some ground with the Louisiana technical college system.

**Welder/Fitter Apprenticeship Program, Joseph Buttross, Prison Enterprises**

Mr. Joseph Buttross briefly touched on the significance of Prison Enterprises within the Department as well as those incarcerated in the Department of Corrections in the state of Louisiana. He also provided a handout for those seated on the council who were in attendance regarding the Welder/Fitter Apprenticeship Program. The handout was also provided to everyone via email.

The Welder/Fitter Apprenticeship Program will certify “lifers” initially as journey workers, who will earn a higher wage and will mentor apprentices that are identified who will be moved to Angola if they are not already currently housed there. The target for this program is offenders who are within 5 years of release. The program is a four-year program. They are utilizing the NCCER curriculum which is already in place through Reentry and Education. Upon completion of the Program, offenders will be included in the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) database and listed as completing a certified apprenticeship program. This will make these offenders attractive candidates to potential employers upon release. The current plan is to expand to other occupations across the Department in other facilities once this program is up and running and has been expanded to other state facilities. They plan to start with 5-7 apprentices.

Mr. Buttross fielded questions regarding the Apprenticeship Program. Ms. Bridget Dinvaut questioned the process, the importance of the certification, and the difference between a journey worker and an apprentice. Mr. Buttross and Mr. Joseph Ardoin, Jr. explained the importance of the RAPIDS database for employment and explained that the journey worker will serve as a mentor to the apprentice on a one to one basis.

Ms. Courtney Baker questioned if the offenders involved in the Program would also be learning the soft skills that are also necessary for employment. Mr. Buttross informed Ms. Baker that although these offenders will not learn those skills in the Program itself, they will be afforded the time and programming through Reentry programming to learn soft skills in those five years prior to release.

Jay Dixon, Jr. mentioned that he has been approached by a group of individuals in the industry that mentor. Mr. Buttross welcomed the possible connection/involvement.

Jennifer Impastato questioned what the next apprenticeship would be. Mr. Buttross mentioned the possibility of an upholstery program in the future but stated that he would like to expand the Welder/Fitter Program from Angola to other facilities throughout the state.

**LA Workforce Commission Employment Development Partnership, Harlen Henegar, Louisiana Workforce Commission**

Mr. Harlen Henegar, Director of Priority Populations for the Louisiana Workforce Commission offered a PowerPoint presentation regarding the LA Workforce Commission Employment Development Partnership. This PowerPoint has been shared with everyone on the Reentry Advisory Council via email.

This partnership sets out to establish a relationship between not only Probation and Parole staff and Louisiana Workforce staff but also between those agencies and Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Education, Department of Health, and the Department of Corrections to ensure that those releasing into society are able to secure employment upon release. This includes communicating and educating employers on what it means for a potential employee to have a criminal record. The Department of Corrections is expected to help in training the LWC employees.

Mr. Henegar mentioned that the process of educating these reentrants will include the local LWC board in their area of incarceration performing in reach in the facilities where these individuals are housed.

Assistant Secretary Covington expressed the need to find upcoming conferences and training opportunities to hold interagency training sessions. He also stated the need for state agencies to get out of their silos and work together.

**TIGER Update, Keith Nordyke, Louisiana State University**

Dr. Keith Nordyke, Project Director of the TIGER tool reported that TIGER is no longer in progress, but has been completed. He briefly explained that TIGER is an automated static risk, criminogenic needs prediction and treatment pathway tool that will provide departmental information on every offender that is incarcerated. It will give levels of risk that are statistically valid. It will also assess criminogenic needs across several domains as well as provide a risk of recidivism level for them.

He then briefly described each tool that is included in the TIGER suite. There is a supervision tool for use in Probation and Parole which measures an ex-offender’s risk of return to prison. An institutional tool which is for the bulk of those in prison. There is a tool that predicts risk for those who have been incarcerated for longer than 15 years and are over the age of 35. There is also a needs assessment that consists of 69-questions, is subjective, and self-administered that gives the criminogenic needs domains that an offender requires for rehabilitation. There is also a Dynamic tool, that predicts risk based on the needs assessment. Finally, there are Treatment Pathways, which consist of departmental programs arranged in a matrix form that suggests, in a hierarchy, which programs the offender should be offered.

Roll out on the tool should begin in St. Tammany parish in the following weeks. There were several train-the-trainer sessions that took place at Headquarters in August. There will also be a training opportunity for TIGER in the north at David Wade Correctional Center on September 10th.

Ms. Sheryl Ranatza cited the importance of the TIGER treatment pathways in providing special conditions for release for those who will be “good timing” out, or immediate releases.

Assistant Secretary Covington mentioned the contract with 2-1-1 and the potential for having it embedded in the TIGER tool.

**Employer Advisory Committee, John Easley, Louisiana State Penitentiary**

Mr. John Easley provided a handout regarding the Employer Advisory Committee to the members of the Reentry Advisory Council. He stated that at Angola they will be implementing an Employer Advisory Committee.

The document provided consisted of basic information on the advisory committee including the way it operates. The second portion is a handbook on the Advisory Committee. The third portion consists of a sample letter from Warden Vannoy to potential Advisory Committee members.

Mr. Easley believes that the Advisory Committee has potential not only for Angola, but also for programs across the state. This would ensure that offenders that are involved are getting the correct training for potential local employers.

Assistant Secretary Covington mentioned the potential for sharing best practices with the Advisory Committee and asked for everyone’s input and thoughts regarding the Advisory Committee.

Jennifer Impastato asked if the Advisory Committee only consisted of employers. Mr. Easley informed that it would consist of not only employers, educators, any person who is actively working to help with programming.

Nicole Sweazy asked if Mr. Easley was aware of how many offenders were in need of housing in order to get gainful employment. Mr. Francis Abbott mentioned that Ms. Sweazy should get in touch with the Judicial Districts and their case managers in regards to housing needs.

**Other Business**

Ms. Sheryl Ranatza spoke briefly on the Angola Museum biannual symposium. This year’s topic is

Reentry regarding its progress and challenges. The Symposium will take place on September 21st from 9

AM to 3 PM. The cost is $10 per person and lunch will be provided. She asked that those who wish to

attend, please register.

Ms. Nicole Sweazy spoke briefly on the Emergency Solutions Grant Bonus Option. She stated that Friday,

August 31st by 4 PM was thedeadline to receive proposals. Those that wished to submit proposals would

have also had to have attended a pre-proposal conference held in June. Through collaboration, the

Department of Corrections and the Louisiana Housing Commission came up with the creation of a case

worker who will work with West Baton Rouge, Dixon Correctional Institute and Elayn Hunt Correctional

Center. If this is successful there is a hope to replicate it throughout state.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

Assistant Secretary Covington asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Joseph Ardoin, Jr. offered a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Bridget Dinvaut and the meeting was adjourned at 11:44 am.

The next meeting will be held on October 25th at 9:00 AM at the *Department of Public Safety and Corrections Headquarters, 504 Mayflower Street, Baton Rouge, LA*.