**Reentry Advisory Council (RAC)**

4th Quarter 2018 Meeting Minutes

Department of Corrections Headquarters

Thursday, October 25, 2018

**Attendees Present:**

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

Winona Connor, Designee for Nicole Sweazy, Louisiana Housing Corporation

Rhett Covington, Dept of Public Safety and Corrections

Ava Dejoie, Louisiana Workforce Commission

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

Dr. Adrienne Fontenot, Proxy for Dr. Monty Sullivan, Louisiana Community and Technical College System

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

Holly Howat, Designee for Judge Jules D. Edwards, III, 15th Judicial District Court

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

Jennifer Katzman, Department of Health

Secretary James Le Blanc, Dept of Public Safety and Corrections

Reverend Paul R. Murray, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center

Chairman Louis Reine, LA-AFL-CIO

Alfreda Tillman Bester, Designee for Marketa Garner Walters, Department of Children and Family Services

**Absent:**

Courtney L. Baker, Louisiana Association of Business and Industry

Michael ‘Mike’ Cazes, Louisiana Sheriff’s Association

Bridget Dinvaut, Louisiana District Attorney’s Association

Daniel R. Martiny, LA Senate

Dr. John Morrison, Department of Public Safety and Corrections

Joseph Prejean, Big Poppas Fitness Gym

Steve Pylant, LA House of Representatives

Sheryl Ranatza, Committee on Parole

**Other:**

Kenneth Burrell, Louisiana Workforce Commission

Vonnie Hawkins, SocialWorx & LAPRISTA

Karissa Page, Louisiana Department of Health

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

Rochelle Ambeau, Deputy Assistant Secretary

LaCara Broussard, Office of Offender Reentry

Amanda Mayeux, Office of Offender Reentry

Malcolm G. Myer, Deputy Secretary

Robert Vehock, Office of Offender ReEntry

**Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Louis Reine at 9:38 am.

**Roll Call**

Roll was called and a quorum was established.

**Welcome and Introductions, Chairman Louis Reine**

Chairman Reine welcomed everyone.

**Approval of the August 2018 Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Reine entertained a motion to adopt the August 2018 minutes. The motion was adopted by Joseph Ardoin, Jr., seconded by James T. Dixon, Jr. and the minutes were unanimously adopted.

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

Secretary Le Blanc mentioned that he would be heading to the Right on Crime Employers’ Summit at Turner Industries. He brought up that in the process of getting more organized with the prison to community handoff, they were dealing with the issues and that the Reentry Advisory Council is a part of this process. He also mentioned that he held several press conferences to discuss the RFP recently.

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

Secretary Le Blanc went over the three components of the reinvestment:

1. Department of Corrections – ($4.3 million)
   1. Reception Center, Raymond Laborde Correctional Center – focusing on the 5 tier 1 LA-PRI parishes (Caddo, Orleans, Jefferson, East Baton Rouge, St. Tammany) – those with medical or mental health issues will be transferred to Elayn Hunt Correctional Center
   2. Education Services, with ATLO ($50,000)
   3. Reentry Courts ($600,000) – Lafayette (Judge Edwards), St. Tammany (Judge Knight), Orleans (Judge Hunter and Judge White), Jefferson (Judge Schlegel), and Drug Court in Caddo.
   4. Day Reporting Centers – Monroe ($450,000) and Thibodeaux ($450,000) – alternative to revocation, wraparound services
   5. Transitional Housing ($400,000) – Secretary Le Blanc has made a visit to Safe Haven and considers this a good option – He also visited the VA hospital in New Orleans as another possible option
   6. Law Enforcement ($51,000) – Overtime for Probation and Parole
   7. Programming at the Local Level ($1.6 million) – Orleans and Jefferson – Plaquemines Parish through contractual arrangement
2. Crime Victims – Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement
   1. Family Justice Center in East Baton Rouge ($750,000)
   2. Crime Victims Reparation Fund ($300,000) – backlog of crime victims’ claims pending from previous years
   3. Child Predator Task Force - Attorney General’s Office ($100,000) – technology improvements
   4. Developing LAVNS and VINE for interface with the Clerk of Courts – for notifying crime victims when offenders discharge or transfer
3. Community
   1. Orleans ($1.4 million)
      1. Public Defenders ($377,000) – legal services and case management on the reentry side
      2. Goodwill Industries ($447,000) – wraparound services
      3. Catholic Charities ($254,000) – wraparound services
      4. The Welcoming Project ($125,000) – job training, internship, education programs
      5. Louisiana Parole Project ($22,433)
      6. Southern University ($97,000) – mentoring, peer support, and behavioral health
      7. Formerly Incarcerated Transition Clinic ($32,795) – physical health
   2. St. Tammany ($87,000)
      1. Catholic Charities ($65,000) – wraparound services
      2. Louisiana Parole Project ($22,000)
   3. East Baton Rouge
      1. Life of a Single Mom ($57,000) – for the female population – life skills, mentoring, and peer support
      2. CAHSD ($327,000) – wraparound services and community coordination
      3. Louisiana Parole Project ($22,000)
   4. Caddo
      1. Louisiana Parole Project ($22,000)
      2. United Way of Northwest Louisiana ($365,000) – wraparound services
   5. Jefferson ($272,000)
      1. Louisiana Parole Project ($22,000)
      2. United Way of Southeast Louisiana ($250,000)

Summary of total investment by parish:

Orleans - $2,028,000

St. Tammany - $562,000

East Baton Rouge – $1.6 million

Caddo – $912,000

Jefferson - $794,000

Current projections are a total of $27 million in savings for the current year. These will be recurring funds that will stay in the Department of Corrections’ budget.

Chairman Reine commended Secretary Le Blanc for his work with Governor John bel Edwards. He asked what percentage of the inmates coming out will be affected by this. Secretary Le Blanc stated that if they are 2 years out, the goal is to affect 100%. Assistant Secretary Covington mentioned that some proposers stated a finite number of those they could serve in a year. This would be the limiting factor.

Chairman Reine asked how this would coordinate with work release. Secretary Le Blanc stated that his intentions are to expand work release. The goal is to increase those in work release by approximately 1,000.

Judge Jules Edwards brought up a point regarding the LA-PRI goal to do a TIGER assessment on every offender as well as the necessity of in reach for high risk and high need offenders.

Assistant Secretary Covington agreed and brought up the use of Day Reporting Centers in those areas where additional case management is necessary. He also mentioned the importance of the JRI fund recipients focusing on these high risk, high need offenders due to the fact that it was part of the RFP.

Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) Secretary Ava Dejoie wanted to know how the Louisiana Workforce Commission could help support these initiatives. Secretary Le Blanc stated that the steering committees at the local level should include a representative of LWC, if they do not currently.

Assistant Secretary Covington mentioned the importance of the new positions being created by Louisiana Workforce Commission that are based upon the DVOPs model who will be focusing on the 5 tier-I parishes. He also mentioned that ATLO is working on a questionnaire that would populate the Hire Network and start an account for the offender prior to release. This will allow LWC to do some case management, in reach for those vocational graduates to ensure that they are placed into skilled professions based on what they were vocationally trained for. He also mentioned the importance of the local workforce development boards being a part of the local steering teams.

Secretary Dejoie stated that she would like to have all offenders tested by Vocational Rehab approximately 6 months pre-release. She mentioned that Vocational Rehab funds are matched and that every $1 of state general funds draws a $3.69 federal match. She also stated that Vocational Rehab dollars are far more flexible than Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds and touts a much larger “pot” of money than WIOA. There are approximately $17 million left on the table because there are not enough state funds to draw down federal dollars.

Chairman Reine posed a question regarding whether WIOA can provide services while still incarcerated because he wanted to know the possibility of it paying for TWIC cards.

Secretary Dejoie stated that this is typically decided by the local boards however, it is possible for the state board to adopt a policy that would make it allowable across the state.

Chairman Reine asked if the local boards are appointed.

Secretary Dejoie stated that they are appointed by the chief elected official in that area. She also mentioned the possible necessity of a side meeting to further discuss usage of Vocational Rehabilitation funds, TWIC cards, etc. She mentioned that there could be a presentation made at the next Workforce Investment Council (WIC) meeting.

When asked how many local boards there are, Secretary Dejoie reported that there are 14.

Jennifer Impastato mentioned that one of the biggest challenges for reentry court is obtaining a letter of intent from an employer. Secretary Dejoie mentioned that the letter of intent was a policy of the local board.

Chairman Reine stated that Turner Industries requires a background check and that this is problematic for those with convictions working in restrictive places. Secretary Le Blanc said that unfortunately there is no way to get around this.

Secretary Dejoie brought up both the Surety Bond program as well as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) as incentives for companies to hire ex-offenders.

**Update on Louisiana Workforce Commission Employment Development Partnership, Ava Dejoie, Secretary, Louisiana Workforce Commission**

Secretary Dejoie briefly recounted the information regarding the 5 individuals being put into the 5 Tier I parishes. She mentioned that these individuals will be working on deliverables provided by the Department of Corrections which will aid in placing offenders in jobs prior to release. These individuals will have access to industry coordinators and will also work with the courts. She also mentioned again the importance of Louisiana Rehabilitative Services (LRS) and Vocational Rehabilitation due to the potential need for things like long-term housing or transportation of offenders, and the flexibility with these funds to provide this type of funding.

Assistant Secretary Covington reiterated the importance of these 5 individuals providing in reach in the consolidated jails. He also stated the importance of placing those offenders who are coming out of vocational programs in employment that matches the skills that they were trained for. These skills were chosen based upon Workforce projections in their specific locations so that they will meet WIOA standards.

Chairman Reine stated the importance of also tying these skilled offenders with building trades experience to apprenticeship programs. These can help elevate these offenders to higher wages and benefit packages along with continued training.

Secretary Dejoie made mention of the apprenticeship program that began at Angola.

Assistant Secretary Covington stated that there would also be an upholstery program for the ladies. He has been working with Joseph Hollins on this.

Chairman Reine mentioned that there are booklets available with all of the existing apprenticeship trades and that he could make these available to DOC.

Secretary Dejoie reported on an apprenticeship with a program called Jericho Road in New Orleans and their need for carpenters. She stated that the Carpenters Union will train prospective workers. She also said that there is an opportunity for home ownership for those working with Jericho Road.

Assistant Secretary Covington mentioned the importance of providing offenders releasing with a specific name rather than just a list of agencies post release. The more specific the referral, the more likely they are to follow up.

James Dixon posed a question regarding using the Justice Reinvestment funds through LWC, if there was a possibility of getting matching funds.

Secretary Dejoie believes that if the case can be made at the legislature in support of this, it would be possible.

**Employment Strategic Planning Grant, Rhett S. Covington, Assistant Secretary**

Assistant Secretary Covington reported that the Department of Corrections recently received a planning grant to prepare offenders for employment upon release, which is consistent with goal number two of the Reentry Advisory Council’s Strategic Plan. This planning grant will lead to a much larger implementation grant if done correctly. In order to complete the planning phase there is a need to establish a core planning group. Mr. Covington asked for nominations in order to fill this 5 to 10-member planning group. He is particularly interested in those who have a focus on employment. The plan is to create a program that could potentially be funded by federal dollars.

**LA-PRI Implementation Timeline, Rhett S. Covington**

Assistant Secretary Covington mentioned that there was an Implementation Steering Team meeting the day before where some issues or “growing pains” were addressed. He mentioned that the LA-PRI model is highly structured but focuses on a larger case plan while targeting those higher risk and higher need offenders and working down from there. He stated that it was critical that the members of the RAC understand how the LA-PRI structure affects them. It is important for the local coalitions to report information to the level of the RAC so that issues can be addressed at the state level, as well.

He reported that the federal government has approved grant funding of 10 community coordinators. These 10 community coordinators will serve a total of 13 parishes across the state. Lafayette has already signed their contract with their community coordinator. There is a hope that these individuals will help facilitate a transfer of information including providing meeting notes, membership information, and any potential issues that may arise.

Assistant Secretary plans to share the RAC Strategic Plan with the local coalitions so that their plans can mirror and inform the RAC’s and vice versa.

He stressed the importance of the jail consolidation plan, triage team, as well as the Reentry Accountability Plan (REAP). He also stated that the LA-PRI is not 20 people going through the process, that this was merely a concept to test the system and reminded everyone that many will fail due to their high risk and high need level.

By the end of this calendar year he hopes to go back to each coalition and establish not only what their structure is now but also what their training needs are for the next few months, make sure they develop their community assessments so that that information can be given to the RAC in order to inform them of potential barriers in the Tier I parishes and ensure that those parishes are prepared for jail consolidation and the triage team model. The plan is to refine and improve everything going forward by the end of the fiscal year.

He stated the importance of RAC members, either directly or through their local counterparts participating in the steering teams as well as local coalitions because input is needed from both a state and local level.

Judge Jules Edwards briefly expressed his gratitude for Dennis Schrantz’s work in Lafayette. He stated that he taught them a great deal about the LA-PRI model and process. He also stated his hopes that LAPRISTA and REAL would work together to provide training and other services.

Chairman Reine asked that the Department recognize the actions and dedication of the Reentry Advisory Council in their efforts with Justice Reform.

**TIGER Implementation Timeline, Rhett S. Covington**

The Office of Technology Services (OTS) continues to work on output reports and coding for the risk needs assessment tool. The tool has been implemented in Covington District Probation and Parole in St. Tammany parish where some replication issues were discovered. The cutoffs have also been modified so that they are more responsive to those offenders releasing. The tool will continue to be refined as more live data is made available in regards to those that fall into high, moderate, and low categories. The plan is to continue deploying the tool with Rayburn Correctional Center, St. Tammany parish jail, and the Day Reporting Center in St. Tammany. Next month the plan is to deploy the tool in Plaquemines, Jefferson, and the Orleans area then to move to Caddo, and finally back to East Baton Rouge. Over the course of this time the plan is to also pick up Probation and Parole districts and state prisons along the way. By the end of the calendar year the plan is to have all five of the Tier I parishes using the TIGER and by the end of the fiscal year to have the entire Department of Corrections and Probation and Parole using the tool. Towards the end of this year or by January Assistant Secretary Covington plans to begin talking to courts about the possibility of using the tool in sentencing.

**Other Business**

There was no other business.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

Chairman Louis Reine asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Joseph Ardoin, Jr. offered a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by James T. Dixon, Jr. and the meeting was adjourned at 11:12 am.

The next meeting will be held on January 24, 2019 at 9:30 AM at the *Department of Public Safety and Corrections Headquarters, 504 Mayflower Street, Baton Rouge, LA*.