

Reentry Advisory Council (RAC)
1st Quarter 2020 Meeting Minutes
Department of Corrections Headquarters
Thursday, January 23, 2020

Attendees Present:

Malcolm Myer, Designee for Secretary James Le Blanc, Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections
Francis Abbott, Designee for Sheryl Ranatza, Committee on Parole
Joseph Ardoin, Jr., LA State Building and Construction Trades Council
Alfreda Tillman Bester, Designee for Marketa Garner Walters, Department of Children and Family Services
Dr. Emily Campbell, Designee for Dr. Monty Sullivan, Louisiana Community and Technical College System
Rhett Covington, Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections
Holly Howat, Designee for Judge Jules D. Edwards, III, 15th Judicial District Court (Telephone Conference)
Dr. John Morrison, Department of Public Safety and Corrections
Reverend Paul R. Murray, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center
Karissa Page, Designee for Jennifer Katzman, Department of Health
Richard Pittman, Designee for Rémy Voisin Starns, Louisiana Public Defender Board (**New**)
Joseph Prejean, Big Poppas Fitness Gym
Chairman Louis Reine, LA-AFL-CIO
Winona Connor, Louisiana Housing Corporation
Sonya Williams, Designee for Ava Dejoie, LA Workforce Commission
Courtney Joiner, Designee for Robert D. Hanser, University of Louisiana at Monroe
Lindsay Jeffery, Designee for Judge Arthur L. Hunter Jr., Orleans Criminal District Court

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
Steve Pylant, LA House of Representatives

Other:

Leslie Chambers, Governor's Office
Nicole Miller, Community Coordinator - Calcasieu Parish (Telephone Conference)
Brittany Herron, Community Coordinator – St. Tammany Parish (Telephone Conference)
Renard Thomas, Community Coordinator - Orleans Parish (Telephone Conference)
Kristin Parsons, Community Coordinator – Caddo-Bossier Parish (Telephone Conference)
Terry Trichell, Community Coordinator - Ouachita Parish (Telephone Conference)
James Windom, Reentry Alliance for Louisiana
Ernest Stephens, LA-AFL-CIO

Dept. of Public Safety & Corrections Headquarters Staff:

Corey Acosta, Probation and Parole
Heather Watson, Office of Offender Reentry
Amanda Mayeau, Office of Offender Reentry
Rochelle Ambeau, DPSC
Kewana Caesor, Probation and Parole
Shelly Edgerton, DPSC
Emileigh Bernard, DPSC
Nicole George, DPSC
Rebecca Ikner, Probation and Parole
Kelsey Pearce, Office of Offender Reentry
Dr. Henry Sanders, Office of Offender Reentry
Hester Serrano, Probation and Parole

Robert Vehock, Office of Offender Reentry
Stephanie Moore, Probation and Parole
Melissa Young, Probation and Parole
Angela Whittaker, DPSC (Telephone Conference)
Jodi Mallett, DPSC

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Louis Reine at 9:36 am.

Roll Call

Roll was called and a quorum was established. 16 of 22 present

Approval of the July and October 2019 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Reine entertained a motion to adopt the July and October 2019 minutes. A motion to accept the minutes was put forward by Joseph Ardoin Jr. and second by, Alfreda Tillman Bester and the minutes were unanimously adopted.

Welcome and Introductions, Chairman Louis Reine

Mr. Reine welcomed everyone. He acknowledged that everyone gives up time from their regular jobs to be at the meetings and expressed his appreciation.

Opening Remarks, Malcolm Myer, Deputy Secretary

Deputy Secretary Myer thanked everyone for being at the meeting. He stated that the last couple meetings we haven't had a quorum and stressed the importance of attendance. He stated the department received a little feedback about parking issues and Assistant Secretary Covington address this issue with reserving spots in the circle to be more accommodating. Deputy Secretary Myer stated we have been given an obligation by the Governor to see Reentry fulfilled and get business done. Deputy Secretary Myer expressed that it has been challenging to approve minutes and set an agenda without a quorum. He encouraged everyone to participate as much as possible.

In addition, he stated Reentry Community Coordinators and staff are growing and working toward getting all the positive things about Reentry out to everyone. He stated what we are doing is a complete shift in what used to be in Corrections. 95% of the people that are incarcerated are coming back to society and in our communities. Deputy Secretary Myer again thanked everyone for being at the meeting and expressed thanks for having a corium and on behalf of the Secretary expressed appreciation everyone's assistance.

Louis Reine asked Deputy Secretary Myer if there was a possibility to meet in building 10 where parking seemed easier. Deputy Secretary Myer stated the Reentry Advisory Committee (RAC) membership was too large for the meeting rooms in building 10.

Remarks from the Governor's Office, Leslie Chambers

Ms. Chambers expressed her thanks for inviting her to the January RAC meeting. She echoed some of Deputy Secretary Myer's points stating we can't do effective Reentry without everyone being at the table whether it be voices, experience or expertise it's reform but it has to be effective reform. She stated the importance of staying in constant communication and constant coordination because we have a lot of good knowledge around the table and a lot of good knowledge in the audience. She voiced whatever she can do to be of any assistance from the Governor's Office please let her know.

Justice Reinvestment Implementation Update, Nicole George, DPS&C

Ms. George stated the last meeting she touched on what was done for the Community Incentive grants. She stated over the summer a NOFA was done to get new applications they were vetted and awarded in November. Chairman Reine asked what did NOFA stand for? Nicole informed Chairman Reine NOFA stood for "Notice of Funding Availability" for the Community Incentive grant. Ms. George stated in November we awarded 8 projects and of those 6 are now fully operational. She stated 3 more are still being negotiated and should be effective in the next few weeks. She highlighted there were 2.67 million for this funding round and these funds will continue annually for the next 3 years for tier 2 parishes which consist of Bossier, Lafourche, Terrebonne, Ouachita, Rapides, Calcasieu and Lafayette.

Alfreda Tillman Bester asked Ms. George to define what the tiers mean? Ms. George stated tier 1 is where most of our returning citizens are returning which consist of East Baton Rouge, St. Tammany, Orleans, Jefferson and Caddo. She explained Tier 2 has been identified as the second largest area of returning citizens which consist of Bossier, Lafourche, Terrebonne, Ouachita, Rapides, Calcasieu and Lafayette. Ms. George stated a pilot program for emergency and transitional housing was approved and \$300,000.00 was allocated to fund this program. She informed the pilot selection was done through an application process allowing housing providers in tier 1 and 2 parishes to apply and once approved would receive a per diem to participate. She stated these participants will be identified by Probation and Parole as needy for immediate shelter or transitional housing. She stated 15 housing provider applications were received and approved for the housing provider pilot program. She informed the RAC members of the housing provider requirements stating the applicant had to have a sound structure, running water and an occupancy approved within the parish. Ms. George supplied Probation and Parole with the list of approved housing providers so as they come across returning citizens/formerly incarcerated persons in need they can connect them with the housing providers. She stated that the housing provider will invoice once a month and payment is made for the returning citizen/formerly incarcerated person stay.

Deputy Secretary Myer asked what is the housing provider rate? Ms. George answered if she remembered correctly it is \$137 weekly or \$550 monthly for Transitional Housing and \$9.00 a day up to \$80 weekly for Emergency Shelter but apologized for not having the exact rates. Ms. George stressed again this is a “pilot” housing provider program. She stated she has received feedback from other housing providers that the per diem was low and she is currently looking at revamping the process but stated we needed to start somewhere to help our returning citizens/formerly incarcerated persons get stabilized as soon as possible. Deputy Secretary Myer also asked has Ms. George has she taken a look at the local housing authorities to see what the HUD rates are and work off their average? Ms. George replied she spoke with Phil Adkins, Probation and Parole Reentry Program Manager in Shreveport and Mr. Adkins put her in contact with the Volunteers of America who were one of the applicants that didn’t apply because the low per diem. Mr. Adkins will set up a meeting with Volunteers of America and Ms. George so together they can figure out a way to coordinate services. Mr. Adkins also reached out to the City of Shreveport who is willing to help pick up the cost that isn’t covered under this pilot program. Ms. George stated that if anyone knows of a housing provider that did not apply because of the low per diem please have them reach out to her because she wants this to continue on an annual basis to make this a sustainable program.

Chairman Reine asked where does the funding come from? Ms. George replied the Community Incentive grant funds which are state funds from justice reinvestment savings. Chairman Reine asked would there be a transportation piece to this program stating he has experienced returning citizens being dropped off at the bus station without transportation to get to the shelters. Ms. George stated that is outside of her realm of JRI but it is defiantly a good question. Assistant Secretary Rhett Covington explained the transportation issue is addressed in a couple of ways:

1. By working with our local jail partners to develop a residence plan prior to release through Basic Jail Guidelines so the jail knows where the returning citizen is going once released then the returning citizen will be taken to Salvation Army if that his/her plan. There is always going to be that quality assurance piece that if this is not happening, we will address it once informed.
2. In most cases, when the returning citizen is dropped off at the bus station it is at the returning citizen’s request, because he/she has arranged for a family member/friend to pick them up and in some cases those family members/friend doesn’t show up. Assistant Secretary Covington encouraged everyone to inform us of cases like this and we will work to address them.

Assistant Secretary Covington stated our transportation issue is a critical reentry issue we experience across the state regardless of where you are going (getting to work, appointments, court dates etc.) due to limited funding and public transportation. He stated we need to figure out a way to work with the current infrastructures to eliminate the gaps and barriers. Chairman Reine asked could there be a person at the bus station to help assist? Assistant Secretary Covington replied that is something we can defiantly explore.

Expansion of Regional Reentry Programs, Rhett Covington, Assistant Secretary

Assistant Secretary Covington stated as a reminder Regional Reentry Programs are our attempt to try and move offenders who are serving time in over 100 local jails across the state back closer to home prior to discharge. He stated back in 2009-2010 we started offering services to those serving time in local jails by

catching the offenders who are getting ready to return to the community by providing discharge planning. He explained through JRI this year Corrections has been able to implement the last two locations. He stated Corrections have 10 Regional Reentry Centers across the state and the next step is to expand the model in what he refers to as phase 1 which is Pre-release, discharge planning, obtain two forms of identification, connect with family and returning to the community. We would like to start bringing offenders in up to five years from discharge depending on the ability of the jail to accommodate the volume. Assistant Secretary Covington addressed the 3 different subcategories:

1. Offenders who are so close to discharge once their time is calculated and credits have been applied programming is nearly impossible prior to discharge.
2. Offenders with detainers who cannot get programming currently because their discharge is unknown stating we try our best to get them as close to home to be able to receive legal help to work to eliminate those detainers prior to release.
3. Offenders who have sufficient time to go through pre-lease programming

Assistant Secretary Covington stated we have started in Plaquemines Parish serving New Orleans, and Jefferson and expanded the program in St. Tammany. He is hoping to find a facility to accommodate Baton Rouge. The goal is to get the returning citizen closer to coalitions, community partners and to provide in reach. Louisiana Workforce Commission provided us staff at our Day Reporting Center and Regional Reentry Centers to help connect to the hiring network and get them employed once released. Assistant Secretary Covington stated we need that same partnership with everyone.

Assistant Secretary Covington stated that DOC opened a reentry program to serve our female population that has been in place since 2010 in Tallauh. Our women make up about 5% of our population in the entire state and most are housed at Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW). He stated our biggest gap is providing careers and technical education programs at LCIW due to funding and finding qualified instructors to teach. He stated he and his staff continue to work and build options.

Chairman Reine asked are the ones entering the program allowed to remain until completion and are they removed for someone on a lower tier? Assistant Secretary Covington stated no.

A discussion by RAC members was had over whether courts are holding previous incarcerated offenders in violation over not being able to pay court fines and fees and ultimately returning them to prison.

Employer's Advisory Committee Update, Dr. Henry Sanders, DPS&C

Dr. Sanders reported that he spoke with the Employer Advisory Committee (EAC) stating they have individuals with state and national footprints on board. Dr. Sanders expressed the National Center of Construction Education Research (NCCER) were very pleased with our program offerings and all the things we are doing like carpentry, welding and cosmetology. Dr. Sanders stated the cosmetology program is set to start soon at LCIW. Dr. Sanders applauded James Windom who has been a great supporter since the beginning cosmetology program. Dr. Sanders shared the cosmetology program will have offender lead instructors who will be certified cosmetology teachers.

Dr. Sanders stated that a safety class will be offered that will address safety inside and out of the classroom and also a Job Life Skills program. Assistant Secretary Covington stated getting all participates going through Job Life Skills, Industry Base Certification and Career Technical Education will allow them to get the classes in tandem.

Assistant Secretary Covington stated in addition a Driver License program will be offered at Louisiana State Penitentiary as a pilot program beginning sometime in March.

Joseph Ardoin asked will OSHA 10 cards still be offered? Dr. Sanders replied yes.

Dr. Sanders also spoke about offering Dental Assistant, Medical Assistant/CNA, Sterile Processing Tech and Computer Coding programs.

Adult Reentry Employment Strategic Grant - (ARES) Grant, Kelsey Pearce, DPS&C

Ms. Pearce stated the purpose of this grant is to identify and fill gaps in employment opportunities and employment services through cross collaboration. She stated they are currently in the planning process of

this grant and spoke of some of the things still left to do were to set up an Executive Steering Committee which would be represented by Reentry Advisory Committee (RAC) members also have an Industry Advisory Committee which will be there EAC and lastly processing planning working groups. Ms. Pearce identified one of the biggest barriers is getting employers to the table. The team came up with a public information campaign by spreading information they already have. She also has plans to do something similar to “state as a model employer” but for previously incarcerated persons. Ms. Pearce informed the group their next working group is scheduled for February 12th. Chairman Louis suggested getting someone from the apprenticeship get involved.

LA-PRI Implementation Steering Team, Robert Vehock, DPS&C

Mr. Vehock spoke about plans moving forward into 2020 are to continue to share information by continuing to have quarterly RAC meetings and discussions, Implementation Steering Team (IST) meetings, Community Coordinator (CC) Meetings, Reentry Program Managers (RPM) meetings and Subcommittee meetings and do our best to combine all of those efforts and discussions.

BJA 2018 Co-Occurring Grant, Jodi Mallett, DPS&C

Ms. Mallett proposed for RAC to be the Advisory Council or Executive oversight board for the Co-occurring grant project. Ms. Mallett explained this grant will treat co-occurring offenders who have mental illness or substance abuse who will be releasing to St. Tammany and East Baton Rouge parishes. She stated this program will help returning citizens with co-occurring disorder connect with care in the community and not return to prison. Ms. Mallett explained this program has been very successful in the past but unfortunately lost funding. She stated the grant was applied for again and was recently granted funding to continue these efforts. Ms. Mallett was asked who the subcommittee members were by Chairman Reine and she stated as follows:

- Jodi Mallett - Program Director
- Teri Barrow - Transition Specialist
- Valerie Hymel - Social Worker
- TBA - Peer Specialist Florida Parishes
- TBA - Peer Specialist Capital Area
- TBA - Probation and Parole
- Dr. Peter Gamache – Evaluator
- Karris Page - Justice-Involved Pre-Release Enrollment Project Manager Louisiana Department of Health

Approval to adopt The New Beginnings Co-Occurring subcommittee

Chairman Reine entertained a motion to adopt Co-Occurring subcommittee. A motion to accept was put forward by Joseph Ardoin Jr. and second by, Alfreda Tillman Bester and Co-Occurring subcommittee was unanimously adopted.

Carl Perkins Grant, Dr. Henry Sanders, DPS&C

Dr. Henry Sanders gave updates on the Carl Perkins grant stating this year Corrections was given its own set aside funding to ensure everyone who gets the funds is in line with the new Carl Perkins 5 law guidelines. As far as Dr. Sanders can see the new law doesn't require anything that Corrections hasn't already been doing for some time. He stated every program must come in align with these new requirements. Dr. Sanders stated one of the most notable changes was integrating academic education and employability skills into programming which is currently being done within Corrections. He stated they will train staff on how the new requirements will affect staff and what is required in order to receive these funds.

Alfreda Tillman Bester asked how much was awarded? Dr. Sanders replied \$358,000.00 was awarded to spread across the state.

2020 RAC Meeting Schedule, Louis Reine, Chairman

Chairman Reine entertained a motion to adopt the 2020 RAC meeting schedule. A motion to accept the meeting schedule was put forward by Joseph Ardoin Jr. and second by, Alfreda Tillman Bester and the 2020 meeting schedule was unanimously adopted.

Other Business

Assistant Secretary Covington discussed the RAC Strategic Plan and asked the membership to look over it before the next scheduled meeting and give feedback.

Public Comment.

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

Chairman Louis Reine adjourned the meeting at 11:08 AM.

The next meeting will be held on April 16, 2020 at 9:30 AM at the *Department of Public Safety and Corrections Headquarters, 504 Mayflower Street, Baton Rouge, LA.*