

**Reentry Advisory Council (RAC)**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2021 Meeting Minutes**  
**Via Zoom**  
**Thursday, February 25, 2021**

**Attendees Present:**

Chairman Louis Reine, LA-AFL-CIO  
Alfreda Tillman Bester, Designee for Marketa Garner Walters, Department of Children and Family Services  
Camille Conway, Designee for Dr. Monty Sullivan, Louisiana Community and Technical College System  
Rhett Covington, Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections  
Judge Fred Crifasi, 15th Judicial District Court  
Karissa Page, Designee for Jennifer Katzman, Department of Health  
Winona Connor, Louisiana Housing Corporation  
Robert D. Hanser, University of Louisiana at Monroe  
Lindsay Jeffery, Designee for Judge Arthur L. Hunter Jr., Orleans Criminal District Court  
Joseph Prejean, Big Poppas Fitness Gym  
Joseph Ardoin, Jr., LA State Building and Construction Trades Council  
Dennis Grimes, Louisiana Sheriff's Association  
Bridget Dinvaux, Louisiana District Attorney's Association  
Kathleen Carpenter, AL Association of Builders and Contractors  
Francis Abbott, Designee for Sheryl Ranatza, Committee on Parole  
Troy Carter, LA Senate

**Absent:**

James Le Blanc, Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections  
Christian Rhodes, Louisiana Association of Business and Industry  
Rémy Voisin Starns, Louisiana Public Defender Board  
Reverend Paul R. Murray, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center  
Tony Bacala, LA House of Representatives  
Dr. Randy Lavespere, Department of Public Safety and Corrections  
Ava Dejoie, LA Workforce Commission

**Other:**

Leslie Chambers, Governor's Office	Chidi Umez
Nicole Miller, Community Coordinator - Calcasieu Parish	Cynthia Thomas
Jessica Strange, Community Coordinator - Orleans Parish	Twanda Laurant
Kristin Parsons, Community Coordinator – Caddo-Bossier Parish	James Soileau
Julie LaFleur, Community Coordinator - Lafayette Parish	Vanessa Spinazola
Brittany Herron, Community Coordinator – St. Tammany Parish	Scott Peyton
Nathan Nelson, Community Coordinator – Ouachita Parish	Fletcher Bell
Tatiana Begault	Thad Tatum
Michelle Feldman	Vonnie Hawkins
Monte Mollere	
Alycia Grace-O'Bear	
Verna Bradley-Jackson	
Josh Gaines	
LeAnn Duran	
Amy Duncan	

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

Malcolm Myer, DPSC	Bradley Noland, Probation and Parole
Rochelle Ambeau, Office of Offender Reentry	Stephanie Webb, Probation and Parole
Robin Milligan, Office of Offender Reentry	Carmen Coutee, Probation and Parole
Nicole George, DPSC	Rebecca Ikner, Probation and Parole
Rene Delouche, Probation and Parole	Ginell Duncan, Probation and Parole

Hester Serrano, Probation and Parole  
Robert Vehock, Office of Offender Reentry  
Kelsey Pearce, Office of Offender Reentry  
Heather Watson, Office of Offender Reentry  
Melissa Young, Probation and Parole  
Stephanie Moore, Probation and Parole  
Betty Vaughn, Probation and Parole

Allison Bradford, Office of Offender Reentry  
Patricia West, Probation and Parole  
Kewana Ceasor, Probation and Parole  
Nancy Moffat, Probation and Parole  
Mike Phelps, Probation and Parole  
Jodie Mallet, DPSC

### **Call to Order**

- Meeting was called to order by Chairman Louis Reine at 9:34 am.

### **Roll Call**

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

### **Approval of the October 2020 Meeting Minutes and the 2021 RAC Meeting Schedule**

- Assistant Secretary Covington entertained a motion to adopt the October 2020 minutes. A motion to accept the minutes was put forward by Francis Abbott, second by Louis Reine and Fred Crifasi abstained with no votes against. The minutes were unanimously adopted.

### **Welcome and Introductions, Assistant Secretary Rhett Covington**

- Assistant Secretary Covington welcomed everyone.

### **Council of State Governments Employment and Post-Secondary Analysis Josh Gains and LeAnn Duran**

- Josh Gains addressed 3 structural barriers to employment, top 10 fields, sectors and industries impacted by barriers to employment imposed by Louisiana law, and recommendations for expanding opportunity while protecting public safety.
- Josh expanded on Focus fields and industries:  
Key take-a-ways:
  - Health care-severely limited for people with higher-level convictions
  - Transportation-few structural barriers but may have significant impacts on CDL drivers
  - Trades, Mechanical & Engineering-few structural barriers but significant barriers may apply based on the place of work
- Josh talked about how Louisiana can better align with other states by limiting employment barriers in general, in licensing, fair chance employment and expungements.
- LeAnn Duran addressed identifying barriers to Post-Secondary Education
  - Reviewing the application and screening processes for post-secondary education in Louisiana
  - Conduct interviews with key education stakeholders to identify opportunities for improvement in the application and screening processes and supportive services that may deter or exclude people with criminal records
- LeAnn also talked about Post-Secondary Education Screening Process and improving access to Post-secondary education
  - Working with Second Chance Pell Pilot Sites and Louisiana Community & Technical College System to provide college transcripts prior to release and counsel each student about enrolling and transferring credits following release from prison
  - Tailor admissions and support services for people with records

### **Camille Conaway with Louisiana Technical College responded to a few college barriers**

- Second Chance Pell was approved in December
  - For academic programs only, not training programs
  - Looking for long-term means to fund short term training programs, right now they are using stimulus funds
  - Camille said they are working on making the transcripts more accessible to justice involved individuals

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

- Robert reviewed the latest IST meeting held, highlighting certain things going on in subcommittees
  - Health sub-committee discussed Post-Incarceration Syndrome
  - Institutional staff reported on the updated 100-hour pre-release curriculum
  - Education staff reported on the workforce portal
  - A member of the ARES team spoke about public information campaign and welding program
- Will try and implement in this form of meeting going forward

### **Grant Initiative Status Reports, Rhett Covington, Assistant Secretary**

- Rhett spoke about the LUMINA Grant stating the need to increase completion rates.....He also stated LUMINA has been a great success.
- Average enrollment in Industry-Based Certification (IBC) from fiscal years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 has increased from 454 to 643 because of availability of programs through funding from Justice Reinvestment Initiative. However, completions were interrupted due to COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in all in person programs to be canceled.
- The addition of 29 CTE/IBC programs at 7 local facilities has resulted in the increase in enrollments at the local level and has offered opportunities in locations that otherwise would not have had any vocational learning opportunities.
- IBC's earned in DPS&C Technical programs
  - Fiscal Year 2019-2020-**1,514**
  - Fiscal Year 2018-2019-**1,255**
- La DPS&C and LCTCS has developed a matrix to help releasing students understand their credits earned from Industry Based Certificates (IBC) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that can be transferred to Louisiana Community and Technical College Systems (LCTCS) schools. LCTCS and DPSC are working on a data sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would allow LCTCS to distribute batch transcripts of current students at the end of each semester to DPSC facilities.
- Working with training programs such as welding and customized employer specific programs that will allow individuals to go into work release and then go into full time work with that company.
- Adult Reentry Employment Strategic Planning Grant resulted in an Implementation Grant award
- Now working on public information campaign with a target month of April, which is "Second Chance Month"
- #WorkforceWednesdays series – a four part webinar series which will educate employers on the benefits of hiring quality candidates with criminal records led by Louisiana Workforce Commission in partnership with Louisiana Department of Corrections.3/10 @ 10:30 AM – On the Job Training - Learn how you can create a pipeline of qualified workers without paying a cent.3/17 @ 10:30 AM – Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) - Learn how to receive up to \$2,400 for qualified second chance new hires.3/24 @ 10:30 AM - Fidelity Bonding - Learn how this free business insurance policy reduces the financial burden of hiring.4/7 @ 10:30 AM - Success Stories and Q&A - Listen to local businesses describe their experience embracing Second Chances. You can also reach out to reentryworkforce@la.gov for more information.
- Virtual career fair tentatively planned for April 21, 2021
- Officially launching the Reentry Workforce Portal for incarcerated individuals to post their profiles and trade skills, as well as potential employers to post employment opportunities. This will start in state institutions and regional reentry centers, will expand to work release facilities
- DOC is adding an employer landing page on its website, incorporating employer facts, FAQ's, dispelling myths, and success stories to educate our employers. Any feedback or recommendations for improvement is appreciated
- Co-occurring Grant which funds the "New Beginnings Program" for adults diagnosed with co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorder

- enrolled 40,
- 21 active in prerelease
- 12-postrelease
- 7 removed
- 9 males and 31 females
- Robert Vehock-Pay for Success Grant-in the planning stage. Focused on providing reentry services and housing for low income/poverty stricken in Orleans parish. More information to come.

#### **RAC Strategic Plan**

- Presented a final draft of the new strategic plan, which has a revised template and is easier to read. Feedback is appreciated and a vote should be at next meeting in May for formal adoption

#### **Other Business**

- Rhett Covington encouraged anyone in the Reentry Advisory Council to reach out to Heather after this meeting, if they would like to get directly involved with one of the IST sub-committees at [Heather.Watson@La.Gov](mailto:Heather.Watson@La.Gov)
- We are collaborating with the Council of State Governments to leverage them and their work as much as we can be going forward.

#### **Public Comment**

- Alfreda Tillman-acknowledged guests she invited from SU Law Center

#### **Adjournment**

- Rhett Covington accepted a motion from Louis Reine seconded by Joseph Ardoin to adjourn the meeting at 11:20 AM.

The next meeting will be held on May 13, 2021 at 9:30 AM the location is TBD.