

Forensic Interagency Task Force

7-25-17

Meeting Narrative

Those attending the meeting held in the DOC Training Academy Complex on the above date were: **Michelle Baxter** (OMHSASI); **Daniel Beauchamp** (Regional Forensic Liaison); **Tory Bright** (Regional MH Services Coordinator); **Andrea Concordia** (Dir. Targeted Case Mgr); **Lance Couturier** (Psychology Dir. Annuitant); **Hazel Dacus**(Forensic Coordinator); **Tishna Dhaliwal** (Johnson&Johnson); **David Dinich** (President FTAC); **James Fouts** (Dir of FSS); **Heidi Fuehrer** (Psych Services Specialist); **Laurie Hess** (FCCII-Forensic Corrections Counselor); **Mary Jordan** (Dir. Spec. Clinical +CJ Unit); **Michael Keefer** (MH Court Coordinator); **Larissa Kimmel** (Dir. of Consumer Supports); **Ray McManamon** (Dir. Emergency & Court Services); **Donna McNelis** (Dir. BH Education); **Heather Pack** (Forensic Case Manager); **Lynn Patrone** (DOC MH Advocate); **Richard Podguski** (Dir. Bureau of Reentry Coordination); **Barbara Quinn** (Dept. D&A); **Melissa Repsher** (Reentry Division Director PBPP); **Meagan Rice** (Justice Related Services); **Nicole Seiple** (Forensic MH Caseworker); **Matthew Sheaffer** (Parole Agent 2); **Jack Sommers** (Superintendent); **Vivian Spiese** (FTAC); **Jill Stemple** (Section Chief); **Jennifer Swope** (DOC Soc. Worker); **Stacy Tekely** (Sup. JRS Unit Mgr.) **Rhonda Tomcavage** (DOC CIT Program Mrg.); **Lloyd Wertz** (FTAC); **Elaine Ziegler** (MH Mgr. Chester Co. Prison) and **Jesse Zortman** (PBPP Analyst).

This is the thirteenth meeting of this resumption of the Forensic Interagency Task Force(FITF) convened by FTAC.

Facilitator, Dave Dinich of FTAC, welcomed the group and asked attendees for introductions and a relating of new things that are happening in the Commonwealth from their varied perspectives.

He then addressed the issues of social determinants and adverse circumstances and their effects on the Behavioral Health of individuals who come in contact with the forensic/corrections system. He shared a recent meeting in Pittsburgh at which there were a number of discussions/presentations which highlighted the overrepresentation of minority populations, specifically African Americans, in the

corrections population and the resulting need for address and sensitization to these realities. He asked about the members' interests in the issues of social determinants and the potential of having a presenter on those issues for the FITF.

Michelle Baxter also shared that there was a SOAR Grant awarded to the Allegheny County Jail. There has been an initial meeting involving that grant award which occurred and involved a number of principles, inclusive of two representatives of the Social Security Administration, to make plans for offering further support and guidance in assisting at the time of release to the community to address those with specific needs.

Mary Jordan noted that the primary interests and involvement in the City of Philadelphia is in the implementation of the ACLU settlement and the efforts that have been made in supporting additional community treatment and placement options as part of that court's order.

Donna McNelis noted that the Forensic Rights Conference is set to be held in Grantville on November 27-29, the twenty-fifth for this annual Conference. Calls for presentations (sent along with this narrative) are due within 10 days. They can be sent to Donna.McNelis@drexelmed.edu.

There was a researcher from the newly formed DOC/Board of Parole who shared some aspects of his section of the office and that there is data being collected that will, eventually, be important for the overall operations of the system and, especially in the area of re-entry.

Tory Bright, Coordinator of the Five-County Southeast Region, shared some of the settlement issues involved in the implementation of the ACLU settlement. The fact that there has been some difficulty in achieving the benchmarks of the settlement was briefly described with noting that an injunction had been filed by the ACLU with a correlating response from the Commonwealth. That agreement was to add beds to the Norristown Campus and following through on the agreement to close the civil unit at that site to affect the Commonwealth's compliance in reducing any waiting list for admission to the Forensic Unit. Tory went on to note that the number of State Mental Hospital beds now available for the population of in the Southeast Region is incredibly low. There is hope that there can be diversion capacities developed in order to keep folks out of the need

for longer term hospitalization and, potentially, the forensic system. She also shared some efforts directed at creating a re-entry program which seeks to improve awareness of the community staff of what needs to be available to assist folks of all ages when leaving the corrections facilities. This type of coordination among OMHSAS, DOC, and the counties into which individuals will be placed is a good sign. The issue of effecting Skilled Nursing Placement for inmates upon release was also discussed and highlighted.

During others' self-introductions there was further discussion of the difficulties in planned placements that occur at the very moment that they are being effected and that those can be frustrating for the involved staff, but, more importantly which can negatively impact the released inmate and her/his chances of success.

Jack Sommers, Superintendent at Waymart noted that there was a recent media event held at his facility which resulted in a high level of positive exposure in the immediately surrounding geographic area. He also shared the desperate need of potential housing and various efforts across the Commonwealth to help arrange placement for inmates upon release. This included a "Block Party" that is planned to raise funds for County inmates to have money for the first month of rent and security deposit for inmates upon release. There have been significant soda and food donations received for the event, set for August of this year.

There was then a presentation by Richard Podgurski on the PA Board of Probation and Parole and the Effective Practices in Community Supervision(EPICS) Training which he leads.

He introduced himself and shared some of his experience in life and in his career path in the forensic system in some counties and with the Commonwealth, for the past seventeen years. The past ten of these were in the Bureau of Offender Re-entry within the Board. He shared his search for Evidence-Based-Practices(EBPs) and how they can be expressed to improve the community re-entry processes and success of inmates who are released.

He then noted the Risk, Needs, and Responsivity(RNR) which define the ways in which he approaches his job and how encourages the Parole Agents in approaching theirs. Risk refers to the potential of offenders to re-offend, not necessarily to how dangerous an inmate might be to others in society. The riskier the person, the

greater number of times the individual will be seen by his/her Parole Agent. Right now, a high-risk parolee is seen twice per month. This level of risk needs to be established by a validated assessment instrument. It needs to be able to measure risk, based upon more effective measuring of the factors that might predict that potential. Clinical judgement has, basically, a 50/50 chance of being correct in predicting recidivism. With an assessment on the person in question, those odds increase to between 65% and 73% accuracy. The assessment will also assist in determining areas of criminogenic need—the need areas that can cause crime and lead to recidivism. There is a risk principle that suggests that, sometimes, when we intervene with a low risk person, we can actually increase the potential for recidivism. Thus, there is a higher likelihood that intervention with medium to high risk persons has more potential for gain and less for negative effects.

There is a focus on needs that assess a criminal's attitudes, companions, attitudes, and personalities as the four primary areas of criminogenic needs. Those needs which seem to have lesser levels of effect and predictability are use of drugs, employment, etc.

Responsivity factors include gender, economic status, learning styles, and culture, among others. Thus, interventions must be done at a cognitive level to address the way a person thinks and eventually change the way s/he behaves. The correlation coefficients for some commonly held beliefs were discussed. In the area of forensics, the use of an actuarial tool as a predictor of recidivism is has a correlation coefficient of .30. Addressing the top four attitudes has a range of .18 to .39. Targeting criminogenic needs is .55—much higher than any other, less researched tool. In general, half of all criminal interventions have been shown to be ineffective.

This led to a discussion of Fidelity—how well the methods/services are followed and delivered in the field. Quality Assurance is key to this aspect of the delivery of an effective practice. This can be highlighted in Motivational Interviewing. The need is to focus those techniques in a manner which in high fidelity to the recommended and refined practices/principles that have been advanced and proven in filed research. Any agency which assesses and effectively delivers the assessments and service delivery processes that have been established, the potential reduction that can be as high as 30%.

There was a question of how often the medium or high-risk individuals are reassessed to assure they are assigned to the correct levels of risk. The response was that these are administered on a once per year basis. The average time of contact between a Parole Agent and his parolees is about 23 minutes. This varies, and escalates significantly when the parolee has behavioral health issues. There is also research that suggests when there is a change in a parolee's Agent, which happens when a person reaches a higher level of release and is at a very low level of risk, that the potential of parole violation increased significantly. The reasons for this seem to have to do with the lack of relationship between the new officer and the parolee. After being researched, there is now a practice of a six-month delay in the assigning of a new Agent to assist with this.

Mr. Podgurski then went on to present the EPICS program which he introduced to the Board of Parole. He noted that this changes the paradigm as to how the Agents are trained and expected to deal with their parolees during their time with the offender. Rather the topics that are followed in the contacts with the Parolee needs to be assessed and, if necessary, changed to provide the structure for the parole contact which include: Check-In, Review the previous interventions and their success, intervention which is driven by the criminogenic needs of the offender and is of a cognitive nature, and the Homework that has been achieved/completed by the parolee since the last visit. An example of an intervention that was shared was to help the parolee to role play a method of removing him/herself from a potential difficult situation, such as having a few friends over who suggest/decide "to go out and have a few beers."

The training in the EPICS project is considerable. It has three full days of classroom type exposure and then five months of follow up involving taping conversations and having them critiqued by the EPICS trainers. The reason for denial by an Agent for involving himself in this process is often that there is "no time." The reality is that the Agent, once trained, uses less time in applying the principles in her/his parolee visits.

In further presentation, Mr. Podgurski noted that research suggests that there needs to be at least 200 hours in cognitive restructuring before a criminal begins to change his/her thinking processes and, thus, her/his behavior. He offered his opinion that training the guards and workers inside the prison in these processes

might prove to be further beneficial over the long term of incarceration that are faced by many of the DOC's inmates.

There were some questions about financial costs and the potential of demonstrating a positive Return on Investment which might impact policy level funding decisions going forward.

The next meeting of the FITF is September 26, 2017 commencing at 10:00AM, and will be held at the DOC Training Academy currently scheduled for the Grogan Room, if possible.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lloyd G. Wertz, FTAC/FSS.