

Forensic Interagency Task Force

July 26, 2016

Meeting Narrative

Those attending the meeting held in the DOC Training Academy on the above date were: **Tricia Baffa** (Forensic Case Mgmt Supervisor); **Carol Bamford** (Director of Emergency & Court Services); **Michelle Baxter** (OMHSAS); **Daniel Beauchamp** (Regional Forensic Liaison); **Tori Bright** (Regional MH Services Coordinator); **Andrea Concordia** (Dir. Intake/Eligibility/SAM); **Hazel Dacus** (Forensic Coordinator); **David Dinich** (President FTAC); **Carl Feldman** (OIM); **James Fouts** (Dir. Forensic System Solutions); **Heidi Fuehrer** (Psychological Services Specialist); **Larry George** (LCBHDS Administrator); **Laurie Hess** (Forensic Corrections Counselor); **Amy Groh** (Dir. Of Crisis/SAM); **Julie Holtry** (Deputy Director of MH); **Michele Jeszenka** (Program Director); **Mary Jordan** (Director); **Michael Keefer** (MH Court Coordinator); **Kerri Miller** (SPORE Case Mgr.); **John Muehsam** (Dir. Crisis/Elwyn); **Sharon Potter** (Sexuality Consultant); **Jessica Reichenbach** (OMHSAS); **Matthew Sheaffer** (Pa Board of Prob & Parole Agent 2); **Jack Sommers** (Superintendent Waymart); **Vivian Spiese** (FTAC); **Joan Steinberg** (Bd member ABIN); **S. Drew Taylor** (Spore Director); **Stacy Tekely** (Unit Manager); **Tammy Twombly** (Social Worker II); **Josh Warfield** (Court Coordinator); **Nancy Wieman** (Consultant); **Jenn Williams** (C-M-P Mental Health); **Elaine Ziegler** (Mental Health Manager); **Lisa Zook** (PA County Administrators); **Jesse Zortman** (PBPP Analyst)

This is the seventh meeting of this resumption of the Forensic Interagency Task Force (FITF) convened by FTAC/FSS with 35 in attendance.

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

Today's first presenter was Carl Feldman, Executive Policy Specialist, Office of Policy Development for Department of Human Services. Introduced by FTAC President, Dave Dinich, Carl was with us to present 3 initiatives regarding returning citizens and MA applications.

He indicated that Secretaries Wetzel and Dallas had a good relationship and had been working together on these initiatives. Handouts (attached) were given out outlining the Compass Expedited Application Process.

Phase one will start in November and will take the form of a MA only expedited application process. The form will be reduced from the current 23 pages to 3 pages. Any application completed by an institution with an authorized Community Partner Number will be processed within 5 days. With notice of the day of release the returning citizen will have their MA only benefits started upon day of release. A series of questions were asked.

- The application must be completed within 60 days of release.
- Applications for other benefits such as cash assistance or Food Stamps will take the usual route and need the normal application.
- The returning citizen can use the CAO, County MA office as an address to receive their card and other mailings.
- Returning citizens can apply for the benefits after release but if the application does not come from an authorized Community Partner it will not take the expedited process route.
- OIM expects to receive 1000 to 1200 new applications a month using this process. They have specific resources to handle the applications.
- Returning Citizens will still need to choose a HealthChoices entity. That will take up to 30 days. Their MA benefits until that is started will remain as fee for service.

They have been using this application process in 3 pilots – Montgomery County, Philadelphia County and SCI Graterford and have processed 350 applications so far. (As a side note a question regarding EBT cards indicates they cannot be used in restaurants.)

- The combined benefit applications will not be expedited. The combined application can be completed prior to the expedited MA application and the expedited MA app will take precedence but only for MA.
- The Expedited Apps will be sent to Central Processing and not the County CAO for processing.

Phase 2 will be setting up the Initial Suspend Function which will suspend for 2 years rather than terminate benefits. Benefits will be renewed upon release from an institution. This is in response to legislation proposed by Senator Pat Vance, passed and signed into law by Governor Wolf. This is set to roll out in May of 2017. If the inmate has been incarcerated over the 2 years the Expedited Application Process will be used. Issues related to renewal applications (6 month, one year, etc.) are being worked out but not in place yet. PACE, a private contractor currently working with the Agency on Aging will be assisting inmates in completing the applications.

Phase 3 will create a shared database between the DHS and the DOC and possibly with county jails. It will have the ability to share information needed to start benefits in real time (the day and time of the application.) This will rollout in June of 2018.

Lynne Patrone gave the next presentation via phone conferencing. This was regarding the “Juvenile Lifers”. This relates to prisoners who committed capitol offenses while between the ages of 14 and 17 and received mandatory sentences of life with no possibility of parole. A recent US Supreme Court decision made the **mandatory** sentencing of life without possibility of parole unconstitutional. There are 509 to 512 inmates that meet this criteria. 295 of them are from Philadelphia. All 509 are to be scheduled for resentencing. Some have been resentedenced already. They may receive the same sentence but it cannot be due to the **mandatory** statute of the overturned law.

Because of the typical length of time in prison, the average age of these inmates being between 40 - 60 and not ever expecting to be released, the anxiety level about potential release is very high. They are being provided with additional supports, seeing Psychology monthly, and being “wrapped in services”. DOC is requesting additional supports to be in place in the community in case they are released soon. They are specifically requesting a contact person in each affected county. Tory Bright asked the question regarding what type of “additional supports” DOC was requesting. Lynne requested an “extra layer of supports to assure that they (returning citizen) can get connected”, specifically for social reintegration. DOC will be sending out Best Practices information soon. One piece of information was related to intellectual maturity level deficits related to the

effects of institutionalization. There may be a Pilot Project started on supporting them. Tory suggested an increase of In Reach to the SCI. There is no current additional funding for this. The current plan is to move the inmate closer to their sentencing county to accommodate scheduling for resentencing.

The next presentation was a report on the activities of the Reentry Committee by Tory Bright. Tory reviewed many of the issues that were brought up in the last Reentry Meeting. A copy of those notes was sent to the members. Dave Dinich thanked Tory for the work done on the committee leadership team and pointed out all the work the committee has done in such a short time.

The documentation committee, chaired by Danny Beauchamp, has completed the survey of counties, the list of forms and information DOC will release, and the creation of a standardized form that counties can use to get as much of the needed information available to them from the DOC. The form has been sent as a suggestion to County Administrators. A suggestion was made to create a pilot utilizing the form to analyze its' effectiveness and ease of use. There was also a suggestion that SCI's get some additional training on the MH System in the Commonwealth to better understand the needs of the Counties in making effective plans for returning citizens. OMHSAS has done some training but may need to reexamine that. Relationships have also been created but work needs to be done on creating a formalized approach to Reentry work between DOC and Counties. The work done so far has focused on the DOC and not County Jails. There was a suggestion for the committee to begin this work as well since many counties only have one or two returning citizens a year coming back to their county from the DOC.

The Benefits committee, chaired by Jim Fouts, has worked on the expedited format of getting MA benefits started since that has been listed as the highest priority. Work will continue on this by creating a more formalized process for completing the expedited application described earlier and having that information disseminated to the county jails and MH systems.

Suggestions for future work included working on expedited applications for other benefits including Cash Assistance and Food Stamps, SSDI and SSI.

The Housing Committee report was presented by its' Chairperson Michelle Baxter. She described the work related to the housing issues that the committee has completed. The committee has done a lot of work investigating other state programs in order to look at viable pilot project proposals for supportive housing projects targeting the returning citizen population with SMI. (Listing and report attached) The committee is leaning towards recommending the Missouri program and welcome comments.

Report completed by Jim Fouts