

Forensic Interagency Task Force

Meeting Narrative

Department Of Corrections Training Complex Elizabethtown, PA

11/22/16

This is the ninth meeting of the resumption of the Forensic Interagency Task Force (FITF) meeting at the DOC Training Academy in Elizabethtown.

The Agenda for today's meeting centered around a presentation and discussion of the Report from the Re-Entry Committee by Committee and FITF Co-Chairpersons Tory Bright with some assistance from Marirosa Lamas.

Attendee self-introductions were requested by Dave Dinich.

Immediately thereafter, there was a discussion focused on a chart that was prepared by Nancy Weiman noting the work and presentations that have been done and received by the FITF over its existence over the past 17 months. A copy of that chart is included with this Narrative. This presentation offered some commentary on the Chart and some of the specifics from those presentation/discussions. This ended with the noting of DOC Secretary Wetzel, appearance at the most recent meeting of the FITF in October. It was shared the Secretary centered his presentation toward the reality that more collaboration and communication is needed between and among the Departments in the Commonwealth, including the Department of Human Services, Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs and others in order to create a more integrated and effective system in addressing the issues at hand for those in the forensics system who have Behavioral Health issues.

Dave highlighted the fact that the FITF membership determined the topics to be heard and the overall direction of the FITF's addressing the issues of those with

Behavioral Health problems who are in the DOC and/or who are involved with the Probation and Parole Program in our Commonwealth.

The presentation regarding the Re-Entry Committee then moved to the topical discussions, led by Tory Bright, surrounding:

What we have done.

She started by noting that there has been a high level of commitment on the part of the members of this Committee and their dedication in following through on the work that was determined to be of priority and the Sub-Committee who worked within the at framework over the year. There was a purpose statement established by the RE-Entry Committee stated as “...To promote the effective and expedient release and re-entry of persons with Serious Mental illness.” The impetus to bring the group together had to do with the primary issue involving the way in which those with Serious Mental Illness(SMI) need to be treated and for whom preparations need to be made while they are still in the DOC system. This was in the context of a recently settled ACLU lawsuit and settlement. Tory related another legal settlement that was more recently reached and directly affecting the Southeast portion of the Commonwealth, and eventually the remainder of PA. She noted that this can be perceived as a duty to be performed, but probably is better seen as an opportunity to make things better in coordinating between the Counties’ community BH systems and the DOC.

We then heard about the survey that was created, administered, and completed by over 200 folks, within and outside of the DOC regarding issues surrounding release and re-entry of those with SMI and ID into the community, typically at the times that their sentences “max out.”

She shared that the DOC MH/ID Roster of 12 month “max out” listing of inmates has showed changes in the form of significant increases, across the Commonwealth, not just in the urban areas. Over the course of several years, there has been a 91% increase in the number of folks listed with SMI on the D Roster in the DOC, primarily due to re-categorization by the DOC to better

highlight those in need of special support and planning before release. Currently there are about 1800 on the roster, scheduled for release over the next 12 months. This continuing increase in numbers needing to have special planning for return to the community must be a focus within the Counties in coordination with the DOC in order to best offer the needed and essential services by these folks preparing to be released. It was also clearly established that there is a high level of inconsistency across PA depending, on the particular locales, to which these inmates are set to return.

There is a need for dedicated support staff in the community to address these needs in the immediate future. Based upon the survey responses, gaps in services were noted and separate Sub-Committees of the Re-Entry Committee were established to address the following:

- Documentation and Communication
- Benefits and Entitlements
- Housing

One of the findings was that there can, in certain cases, be a complete lack of needed services to address the specific, clinical needs of inmates on the D-Roster list who are set to be released over the next 12 months.

As to the Documentation and Communication Sub-Committee, there were a number of outreach meetings to the DHS and some of its Offices, such as that of the DHS Office of Income Maintenance(OIM). There was also a review of county and state regulations related to this topic. Additionally, there was a comparison of records which are required and maintained within the DOC and within the County Programs and their Administrators. There was an updating of the County Forensic Contact List in addition to a template that might be used by the DOC in preparation for re-entry into a county program, depending upon a local decision as to its relevance/usefulness. Some of the results were the understanding that there are limitations in certain portions of the system and a better and mutual grasp of the opportunities that exist in the varied communities providing placements across the State.

There have also been several recommendations forwarded:

- Develop a “Pilot Training” for DOC Support staff about treatment options and community supports.
- Expand and promote an Enhanced Re-entry Program Model to address hard to place individuals.
- Routinely update and modify the County Admins contact list
- Create a Cross-System training around reentry planning inclusive of documentation and information requirements and county/DOC resources

Next to be discussed was the Benefit/Entitlement Subcommittee. Several issues were addressed including: Medicaid application and “turn on” upon release of the inmate, the availability of inmates’ income and documentation upon release so that individuals can access services and necessary living requirements including housing and food. Senator Vance’s legislative efforts were noted as her sponsored legislation has effected this within the Commonwealth for inmates preparing for release who would qualify for MA benefits. This will involve a three-phase implementation using a DHS/DOC database with a potential for its application within the local, county jails as well. Financial support is another issue that needs to be considered. There was a question upon the availability of medications upon leaving the DOC. It was noted that a supply of psycho-active medication is provided at the 90-day level, with physical health medications at a 30-day level. There was another observation offered regarding the “Continuums of Care” which can help in having appointments established for inmates upon release to prevent any falling “through the cracks” without appointments before their medications are depleted. As to federal Benefits of SSI and SSDI, there are efforts directed toward their reinstatement upon release. It was noted that there is a SOAR program managed by one of the Re-Entry Committee members with some pilots being implemented in at least one of the larger, urban counties in the Commonwealth. These benefits can take upwards of a year to be reinstated and need to be initiated well before the established date of release.

Finally, **the Housing Sub-Committee was discussed** with some goals of more fully understanding the population and researching some of the existing models in

other states which might be applicable or adapted for use in PA. These include one in Missouri, another in Salt Lake City/Nevada, one in Oklahoma and another in New York State. Allegheny County seems to have a positive effort in this regard as well. It was noted that there are overall recommendations from the Re-Entry Committee, which will be more fully discussed in the final portion of this presentation. It was also stated that there are grant opportunities, not only from within the Commonwealth, but also from the Federal Levels, including SAMHSA.

As to the next steps to be taken, there are a number of recommendations to be considered by the FITF with a determination of priorities to be pursued.

Recommendations for What We Should Do Next

1. Continue the work of the FITF and perhaps expand the organizations/stakeholders represented at the meetings—such as persons with lived experience in the system and their families. Additional representatives from the Counties, especially those involved in Intellectual disabilities and others. DISCUSSION: When changes/improvements in practice actually do occur, there needs to be a tracking of data as to the efficacy of those changes to be measured and demonstrated as successful or not. Could an annual report be created to be shared with others in the Commonwealth to demonstrate the efficacy of the FITF and its recommended changes? It was agreed that the FITF should, indeed, continue its meetings.
2. Propose that the PA Association of County Administrators of MH and ID Services have direct representation on the PA Commission for Crime and Delinquency(PCCD), Mental Health and Criminal Justice Committee(MHJAC), and representation on the FITF in order to share communication with its membership group in order to impact successful reentry of the SMI population into its communities. DISCUSSION: It was stated that there are representatives of CCAP on the MHJAC. One member present, Larry George, Lancaster County, agreed to offer himself to serve on the MHJAC. This recommendation will be taken back to that Committee for further consideration. One

key is that, whoever makes that commitment, should also be present and attend the FITF to share those proceedings.

3. Develop formal and routine communication among the PA Assn of County MH and ID Administrators, the PCCD, the PA Board of Probation and Parole, and the DHS' OMHSAS. As a secondary recommendation, there should be a relationship and agreement established through the creation of a Letter of Agreement among those groups to better collaborate, discuss, plan and implement policies and practices, etc. DISCUSSION: Add CCAP to that listing of collaborating organizations/groups. Can invitations be made to PA's Department Secretaries to attend the FITF Meetings? In the most recent publication from CCAP regarding forensics, there was recognition that the County Programs will be the primary recipients of the released inmates. It was also suggested that routine communication might be a method to be pursued, rather than a formal Letter of Agreement.
4. Review and address the subcommittees' recommendations as noted by the Re-Entry Summary to develop priorities for Calendar 2017. DISCUSSION: Agreed.
5. Promote discussion with a broader base of potential funders: PCCD, DOC and OMHSAS, to support strategies for new initiatives to collaborate and understand some best practices and evidence-based practices for re-entry of the SMI Population. DISCUSSION: There is some effort which needs to be directed in this vein toward federal levels, such as SAMHSA. This is also included in the MHJAC plans for re-entry and subsequent funding announcements from PCCD.
6. Encourage and strengthen consumer/family input and participation on the FIITF and at various planning and implementation levels. DISCUSSION: One participant noted that the OMHSAS Planning Council meets in the near future and that an invitation could be offered to that gathering for a representative. It was suggested that a presentation be offered to that Council on the FITF to better inform those members to encourage their agreement to participate. Also,

we should invite someone from NAMI to attend and participate as well. It was also suggested that a description of the FITF and its background be added to the report for those who might receive it and not have been informed on the topic.

The FITF agreed that this compilation/report was very well done and that the Re-Entry Committee was obviously active and its efforts clearly have borne fruit. The group was asked to support the adoption of the Report as final, from its current status as "DRAFT." It was noted that there was an update of the Department of Justice findings that can be noted. Tory shared her email address and that of Dave Dinich to secure any further input or suggestions by early next week, as it is being offered as part of a presentation at the upcoming Criminal Justice Conference. There seemed to be general consensus that the report could be offered in a presentation at the Conference with the suggested additions offered by FITF Members added

There was another question added as to the potential of involvement of County Prisons and how can we reach out to them for engagement. It was noted that there could be a presentation at the PA Wardens' Association to help edify that group to these issues at the DOC level and beyond that have been deliberated by the FITF.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 24, 2017 at the DOC Training Offices in Elizabethtown commencing at 10:00AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lloyd G. Wertz, FTAC/FSS.