

# Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force: Steering Committee

Meeting Summary for November 4, 2021

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## 1. Call to Order

Committee Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. The meeting was held via remote-only Zoom Webinar.

Members Present: Barry Buchanan, Caleb Erickson, Arlene Feld, Stephen Gockley, Dan Hammill, Jack Hovenier, Raylene King, Perry Mowery, Mike Parker

Members Absent: Tyler Schroeder

## 2. Recommendations for amendments to State legislation on police reforms

This item was not discussed.

## 3. [Behavioral Health Provider Ride-Along with Law Enforcement \(00:01:49\)](#)

Parker reported for the Behavioral Health Committee and introduced the proposed program.

Doug Chadwick, Whatcom County Undersheriff, gave a presentation on the proposed program, which is modeled from the Impact Program in Skagit County. This program would be in addition to the unarmed response model that is also being discussed in Bellingham. Multiple variations of crisis response methods will suit the greatest number of people in need.

Committee members discussed potential funding options, the impact on how calls are dispatched, whether there are challenges in the workforce for hiring Sheriff's Office deputies, potential funding through the North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization (BH-ASO), whether there have been discussion about the Impact Program with Compass Health, and law enforcement and corrections deputies' training on mental health crisis response.

Hammill moved to recommend to the full Task Force to support the development of the program based on the Impact Program model. The motion was seconded.

Committee members discussed whether they should name the program or focus on the content of the program and consistency in crisis response.

Hammill amended the motion to recommend to the full Task Force to support the development of a behavioral health and law enforcement co-responder program. The amended motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

## 4. [Year-End Report to County Council \(00:31:19\)](#)

Jill Nixon, County Council Legislative Coordinator, referenced the draft report and asked committee members to confirm and add to the content of the draft report. Committee members noted a number of changes and additions, including:

- Expand on the next steps regarding implementation of the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) toolkit
- Include review of the LEAD program and pretrial processes in the next steps for the Legal and Justice Systems Committee

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- Add a focus on the behavioral health workforce and monitoring emerging problems with new street drug trends in the community in the next steps for the Behavioral Health Committee
- Add next steps for the quarterly Joint Behavioral Health and Legal & Justice Systems Committee meeting that include periodic updates on LEAD and the Ground-level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) Program, how well law enforcement and behavioral health units are using the Crisis Stabilization Center, and the progress of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding recommendations.
- A next step for the INDEX Committee would include engaging a data consultant.

Committee members also discussed the unfilled position for a jail behavioral health specialist dedicated to reentry services.

### 5. [Public Health Advisory Board Racial Equity Subcommittee Meeting \(00:47:44\)](#)

Gockley, Nixon, and Parker spoke about a recent meeting of a racial equity workgroup of the County's Public Health Advisory Board to address a County Council resolution declaring racism a public health crisis:

- The meeting included representatives of various citizen advisory committees to discuss how they are handling racial equity issues within their advisory committee.
- The Health Department beginning implementation of the goals and tasks outlined in the resolution.
- Outreach and recruiting for all county boards and commissions
- Connecting with the Racial Equity Commission when it is formed
- The variety of different advisory committee subject matter who attended
- The commonalities in barriers experienced by all the advisory committee, such as data, participation, and communication with the public
- Similar needs in multiple committees that will allow them to share options for solutions and potential funding to overcome similar barriers
- The possibility of designated a Task Force representative to attend future meetings of this workgroup
- Expectations that this workgroup would focus on fixing systemic changes, instead of diversifying the membership on and participation with the advisory committees.

### 6. [Items for the next Task Force Agenda \(00:56:03\)](#)

Committee members spoke about:

- Potential recommendations from the Prosecutor Richey to clarify recent State legislation, particularly about getting clarity on what is allowed regarding the Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) and probable cause vs reasonable suspicion
- Invite Chief of Corrections Wendy Jones to talk about the general status update about the jail, including:
  - How the pandemic is slowing things down in terms of jail space and movement to Western State Hospital for the 24 percent of inmates with serious mental illness
  - Factors impacting space constraints in the jail, which include social distancing due to the Covid pandemic, inmates who need to be isolated due to severe mental illness, and court backlog
  - The complexity of charges for which people are being held
  - Individuals who aren't going to jail, but who should be, including frustration from judges, law enforcement, and court officials due to jail space constraints

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- Information on what agencies need to overcome barriers and challenges, and get the criminal justice system working more efficiently
- Status of the jail juvenile behavioral health treatment program
- Status of the behavioral health reentry specialist position

### 7. [Other Business \(01:12:15\)](#)

Parker spoke about recent meetings with providers to target housing resources to GRACE and LEAD participants. Also, and Lifeline Connections will soon open and operate the Recovery House as a low intensity treatment facility, starting with men in Drug Court.

Nixon stated that the County Executive is recommending approval of the budget supplemental request for 2022 to fund a communications consultant for the Task Force.

Feld spoke about taking advantage of funding resources that are becoming available.

### 8. **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

### 9. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.