

Work Release Siting Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes August 22, 2007

Committee Members: Ida Ballasiotes, Anne Fiala, Ross Gallagher, John Hickman, Ed Holm, Nancy McLaughlin, Tim Quenzer, and Marie Sullivan

Moderator: David Jansen

Presenters: Harold Clarke, Steve Johnson, Clela Steelhammer

Support: Sandy Robertson, Kathleen Stewart, Rebecca Barney

Welcome from Secretary Clarke

Secretary Clarke thanked the committee members for being part of this important work. Each committee member will bring a unique view and perspective, which will facilitate a richer exchange.

Most offenders will be released at some point; in Washington, the average offender spends 21 months in prison and the Department releases approximately 8,900 offenders annually. We don't want them to recidivate and so are investing \$25 million into re-entry activities. Since 50 percent of offenders in prison were not gainfully employed at the time their crime was committed, employment will be a major focus in re-entry.

Work release has been shown to have a positive impact on securing and keeping jobs. Additionally, work release provides offenders with the opportunity to transition to a lifestyle in the community. Work release centers hold offenders accountable. The Department intends to double the available work release beds over the next ten years, adding one work release each year.

ESSB 6157 supports the re-entry initiative, as does the Governor's budget.

Questions and Answers:

Judge Hickman asked if the end product of the committee will be siting work release centers. Secretary Clarke responded that he would like to see guidance in terms of locations across the state where the committee will recommend new work release centers be established. He also explained 6157, which requires the Department to send offenders back to the county of origin. As we work to implement this, we are finding it difficult to place offenders in some counties that may not have a work release facility, a community justice center, or other necessary services.

Nancy McLaughlin asked if services are being expanded into rural areas. Secretary Clarke replied that the 6157 legislation also requires the Department to work with community corrections networks to help offenders be successful in the community. A number of organizations will be involved. Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) was also given specific charges, to include housing.

Ross Gallagher spoke about Mason County, where there is a shortage of jobs. He expressed concern about offenders finding employment and sponsorships in this situation. Secretary Clarke said this is a challenge that will vary in different locations around the state. Job skills are being provided to offenders in prison. The Department is working with unions to determine what types of jobs are available in the community and the Correctional Industries Board is working to identify employment needs in the community.

Nancy McLaughlin supports the Department's focus on job skills training, since the Spokane area will soon have a workforce that is nearing retirement. Secretary Clarke indicated that in addition to the Correctional Industries Board, the Department is working with technical and community colleges to identify what training we should be providing. The Department is part of a collaborative effort with a statewide perspective.

Logistics and Agenda

David Jansen provided logistical information regarding the meeting location, lunch, and the presence of TVW for purposes of recording the meeting. David also explained to the committee how future meetings will be determined and gave a brief overview of the content of the notebooks provided to committee members.

After a review of the agenda, each committee member provided a brief introduction and indicated their interest and/or affiliation. The audience was also given the opportunity to introduce themselves.

Review of the Information Packet

David explained that the information packets were not provided to the committee members prior to today's meeting so that the public could receive the information at the same time as the committee. In terms of time frames, the Department would like the work of the committee to be completed in October 2007.

David reviewed the documents in the presentation. He explained that the Department is not yet ready to begin the site selection process. The law did require the Department to submit a prioritized list of counties for possible siting of a work release facility; this list was submitted to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) in July 2007, but it can be revised.

Nancy McLaughlin asked for clarification on the roles of the different committees reflected in the legislation. David explained that the work of this committee is to identify a process for equitable distribution of work release facilities; that process will then be used to identify the counties for which siting will be considered.

The Department has statutory spending authority to initiate the process of investing in additional work release facilities.

Work release facilities are for both male and female offenders. Offenders at work release have job opportunities, programs, and specialized treatment programs. Work release is considered a privilege.

David reminded the committee that the task is not to plan for a specific number of beds; rather, it is expected that the siting process will begin in several locations at once. The Department has suggested some new partnerships between counties to share a work release facility and/or a community justice center.

Input from the public can be sent to wrsiting@doc1.wa.gov or can be sent by mail to:

Work Release Siting
Capital Programs
Washington State Department of Corrections
7345 Linderson Way SW
Tumwater, WA 98501-6504

Work Release Facilities

Steve Johnson provided an overview of the counties that currently have work release facilities and the adjacent counties that they serve. He also provided specific information on male and female population by facility, as well as which organization has oversight of each facility.

Judge Hickman asked for clarification that the Department only operates one work release. Steve explained that Tri-County Work Release is the only work release that is owned and operated by the Department. All other work release facilities are operated by private entities; however, the Department has a presence at each facility. The contractors and the Department work in partnership with each other.

Preliminary Work by the Department

David next presented information that reflects the work already done by the Department. He reminded the committee that the Department is not defending its July submittal to OFM; rather, we are interested in exploring other ideas.

Senator Mike Carroll

As a sponsor of ESSB 6157, Senator Carroll was asked to address the committee. He spoke about the report from the Washington Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) that will reflect best practices. Senator Carroll encouraged the committee to put forth many ideas to help offenders have a fresh start and to reduce recidivism. He is hopeful that 6157 will start the process to make corrections more effective and keep our communities safer. Senator Carroll may attend future meetings, as his calendar permits.

The Formula

Ida Ballasiotes referenced the letter to Victor Moore of OFM, which references the tasks of the committee as being to review both the methodology and the potential partnerships between counties. Ida asked if the report the committee will prepare will give specific recommendations on the number of beds per site, or if the committee is just identifying the process. David responded that he would like to see a math formula that will generate the

number of beds per county; however, the end product may also include specific recommendations.

Ida replied that the intent of the bill is clear. She doesn't necessarily believe that mathematical equations will address all of the issues, some of which are emotional. David said the basic intent of 6157 is to equitably distribute work release resources. He recognizes the emotional concerns, but believes that will be addressed by other public processes once the siting process is underway and local communities become involved.

Committee Governance

David suggested the committee meet in private to discuss how they want to manage the committee. When the meeting re-convened, Prosecutor Ed Holm was announced as the Chair, with Monroe Police Chief Tim Quenzer as the Vice Chair.

The committee next discussed future meetings. It was agreed that the committee will meet next on October 2 or 3, in the afternoon. The committee prefers to meet in the SeaTac area to accommodate travel.

A Summary of Work Release

At Marie Sullivan's request, Steve Johnson provided a summary of what occurs at work release. In work release, offenders are transitioning from prison to the community. The average length of stay in work release is 3.4 months, but offenders can stay up to six months. Offenders at work release have the lowest classification possible.

When the offender arrives at work release, he/she receives an orientation and intake. The offender then works to get a social security card and may need to take care of banking (such as cashing a voucher). Staff at the work release meet with the offender to discuss the work release plan.

The specific needs of the offender (substance abuse, employment, etc.) are discussed with the intake committee. Within 3-5 days of arrival, the offender is looking for work, which is the emphasis at work release. Once the offender is working, his/her individual schedule is considered and the offender is put into programming. For substance abuse, work release offers a continuum of care from programming received in prison. Many community sources are used by offenders at work release.

Offenders can have visitors, take social outings with pre-approved persons (these are limited by both time and location), and be issued a point-to-point pass to take care of essential business, such as a court appearance. Staff assist those offenders preparing to leave work release to develop a viable release plan.

Ida asked several questions about the job search and the types of jobs available. Steve replied that each work release has a pre-approved list of employers that frequently hire work release offenders. The work release facilities also have partnerships with the Employment Security Department, which helps offenders find jobs and utilize the existing referral system. Types of jobs typically found by offenders are in food services and construction, which varies by location.

Nancy McLaughlin asked about job training in prisons and whether it is connected to potential jobs in the community for those going to work release. Steve indicated the Department has done some work with the trades industry; however, there isn't a real fluid flow between prison jobs and community jobs. David added that the re-entry initiative will address the need for job training, education, skills and work ethic, and communication. We are not yet at the point where prison training and education links with work release and community jobs.

Judge Hickman asked if both violent and non-violent offenders are eligible for work release. Steve affirmed that is the case, although there are specific parameters defined by policy and further supported by work release screenings. Judge Hickman also asked if any of the work releases are total lock-down facilities and Steve responded that the Clark County Work Release is a total lock-down facility because it is co-located with the jail. David said that work release facilities are not confinement facilities as we define them. Offenders check-in and check-out and are sanctioned if they violate this process.

Ida Ballasiotes stated that work release eases the prison population as offenders are preparing to release to the community.

Marie Sullivan asked if someone at work release facilities checks on the departure and arrival times of offenders and how an offender is actually tracked while at work. Steve responded that the Community Corrections Officer (CCO) makes contact with the employer to set the parameters of employment for the offender. The employer must call the work release if the offender does not arrive at work. Also, travel times are carefully calculated by work release staff.

Nancy McLaughlin asked what makes an offender more likely to go to work release as a priority. Steve replied that offenders eligible for work release have to meet a specific custody level. An offender who gets into a lot of trouble in prison likely won't go to work release.

Ed Holm asked if work release time is part of the sentence; Steve indicated that offenders in work release are finishing their prison sentence.

David offered a tour of any work release to interested committee members.

Data Collection and Analysis

David introduced Clela Steelhammer from the Department's Budget Resource Management office. Clela provided much of the data included in the committee's information packets. Clela explained some of the specific tables and charts to the committee and was able to answer several questions posed by committee members.

David explained that the data reflects the county that the offender was released back into. Since 6157 was just implemented, the Department has not yet had time to gather data and statistics that reflect offenders being returned to their county of origin. It is unknown if 6157 will cause a significant change in the county data provided.

The committee reviewed and discussed the data, making comparisons of different counties and different data elements.

Judge Hickman asked if there are any studies that show work release reduces recidivism. Audience member Shani Bauer responded by informing the committee that 6157 tasks the WSIPP with looking at work release to determine its effectiveness; however, that work has not yet been completed.

Marie Sullivan asked Clela if current data could determine if there is a decrease in recidivism after work release. Clela indicated that the Department's current data can look at returns to prison after work release.

Marie Sullivan indicated that CTED has received over \$3 million for a housing pilot program in the next biennium and the agency is looking to do as many as six pilot programs for those that are high-risk, high-needs.

Ida Ballasiotes wants the study to consider all offenders, not just those that are the ideal work release participant (non-violent, educated, and with job skills).

David explained the Department is reviewing the screening criteria to identify which offenders will go to work release. Also under consideration is if work release should be extended beyond six months' maximum stay. The Department does want an unbiased assessment of work release.

Nancy McLaughlin asked if the Department's data could be reviewed and studied by statisticians from other agencies. David offered to provide the data to the committee members and welcomed review from others. Additionally, the Department will change the data to reflect actual number of beds, rather than percentages.

The committee discussed the possibility of partnering counties. David stated that work release facilities should be in locations where jobs and services are available. He suggested that committee members who are also involved in local government might consider talking with them about the idea of partnering with another county.

Judge Hickman expressed concern because public safety cannot be put into a formula. In order to know if there are work release facilities where illegal activities occur, he would like data on the re-offense rate at work release facilities so the committee can accurately discuss risk factors and community safety.

On the chart titled "Where do DOC supervised offenders come from?" Ed Holm noted the data for Whatcom and Grant counties seems opposite of that for all other counties. David agreed to have Department staff verify that information and let the committee know. Ed also asked why Snohomish County did not have a work release. Anne Fiala explained that there was an incident in Snohomish County several years ago where an offender from a work release committed a murder. That work release is no longer in existence.

David noted the following questions to be researched for the committee:

- So that review of the data can be conducted by other statisticians, the Department will forward the working spreadsheets to the committee.

- The Department will translate the existing data into bed numbers.
- The Department will gather data about the efficacy of work release.
- The Department will provide maps and population data.

David encouraged committee members to have further discussion about partnerships with adjacent counties.

Ida Ballasiotes suggested the committee may want to look at a regional concept, rather than by county. David acknowledged this idea is in 6157.

Funding for the next biennium will result in 100 to 120 new work release beds. Funding will always be the driver; however, if there is a methodology in place, the funding likely won't change much from biennium to biennium. Regarding the notion of over-building, David indicated the Department will build new work release facilities with a conservative approach. Also, we won't just build new facilities – we may lease or work with a contractor who has an existing building.

Marie Sullivan indicated that 6157 requires all counties to conduct an inventory of the services available in their communities. This work must be completed by January 2008.

In response to several questions, David informed the committee that there is \$17 million for the biennium and that will be used to provide 120 new work release beds. It takes approximately 18 months to site a new facility.

Public Comment

Nora Sizemore is a resident of Kingston, Washington, and a member of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Her 17-year-old son Kyle was killed in 2005 while riding in a vehicle driven by a young man under the influence of alcohol and drugs. The driver received a light sentence and is currently at Peninsula Work Release; he will be released in November and will likely return to the community in which she lives. She does not believe the Department is adequately monitoring this offender while he is in work release and she does not support his release back into the community where his victim's family resides.

Larry Fehr is the Senior Vice President of Pioneer Human Services that operates six work release facilities in Washington. He cited research that proves the effectiveness of work release. Specifically, research shows that the Pioneer program results in a 6.4% recidivism rate compared to other work releases in Washington that have a 15% recidivism rate. Nancy McLaughlin asked Mr. Fehr what Pioneer does differently than other contractors and Mr. Fehr indicated that Pioneer owns businesses that employ offenders and affordable housing that offenders can utilize. Pioneer offers wrap-around services.

The Next Meeting

Judge Hickman suggested that the agenda for the next meeting should include discussion about specific criteria for equitable siting. He also asked for more simplified statistics.

Ed Holm asked about the overall function of the committee. David suggested there are some overlaps in the work of this committee and others. This committee correlates well with siting and policy. David indicated the Department has not yet decided the membership of the other committees; however, he suggested a willingness to continue working with this committee on those issues.

Marie Sullivan suggested having a computer and the data files at the October meeting so that the data can be worked at the meeting.

A conference call will be held in mid-September to identify other indicators for which the Department can gather data prior to the next meeting. David indicated the next agenda will include a discussion on the long-term role of the committee.

Ed Holm requested the Department speak with its AAG's about the impact of what will happen if the committee is not successful – if they design a structure that won't work. David agreed that legal legitimacy may be a concern.

Ross Gallagher expressed an obligation to his organization and an interest in being on the committee for the later steps.

Approved October 3, 2007